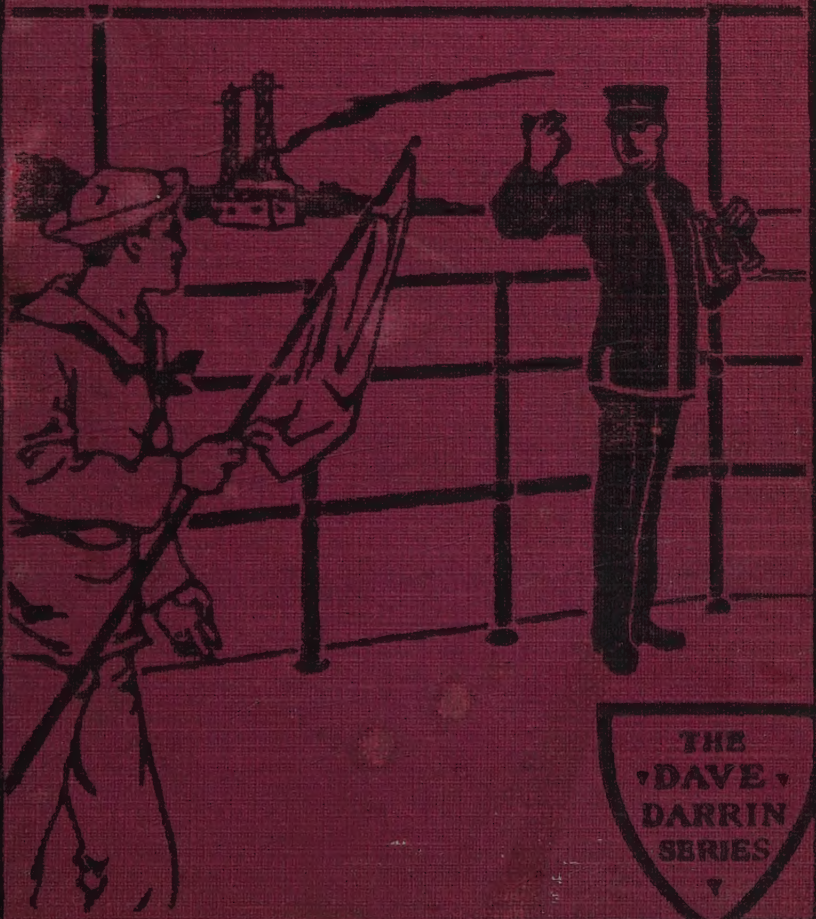
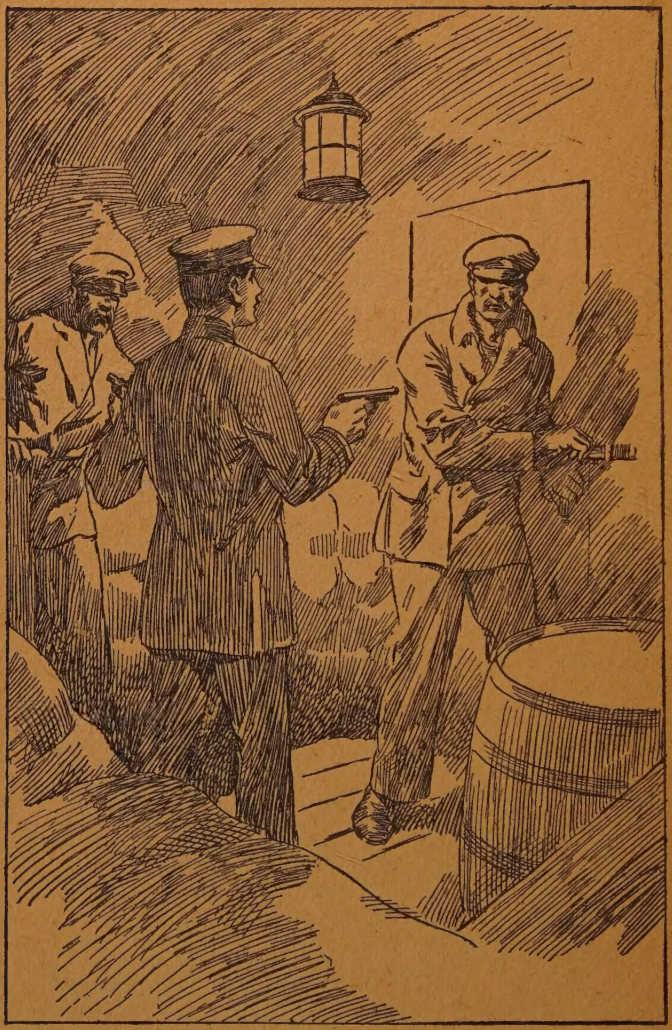
DAVE DARRIN AFTER THE MINE LAYERS

H·IRVING·HANCOCK



THE ·DAVE· DARRIN SERIES

Birthday Greetings To Bil
On his 11th Birthday Fro
Oslin. 1935.



"Unbolt the door!"

Frontispiece

Dave Darrin After The Mine Layers

OR

Hitting the Enemy a Hard Naval Blow

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

Author of "Dave Darrin at Vera Cruz," "Dave Darrin on Mediterranean Service," "Dave Darrin's South American Cruise," "Dave Darrin on the Asiatic Station," "Dave Darrin and the German Submarines," etc., etc.

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DAVE DARRIN AFTER THE MINE LAYERS

CHAPTER I

WEIGHING ANCHOR FOR THE GREAT CRUISE

"IT sounds like the greatest cruise ever!" declared Danny Grin, enthusiastically, as he rose and began to pace the narrow limits of the chart-room of the destroyer commanded by his chum, Lieutenant-Commander Dave Darrin.

"It is undoubtedly the most dangerous work we've ever undertaken," Darrin observed thoughtfully.

"All the better!" answered Dan lightly.

"In our drive against the submarines off the Irish coast," Dave continued, "we met perils enough to satisfy the average salt water man. But this——"

"Is going to prove the very essence and joy of real fighting work at sea!" Dan interposed.

"Oh, you old fire-eater!" laughed Darrin.

"Not a bit of a fire-eater," declared Dalzell with dignity. "I'm a business man, Davy. Our business, just now, is to win the war by killing Germans, and I've embarked upon that career with all the enthusiasm that goes with it. That's all."

"And quite enough," Darrin added, soberly.

"I agree with you that it's our business to kill Germans, yet I could wish that the Germans themselves were in better business, for then we wouldn't have to do any killing."

"You talk almost like a pacifist," snorted Dan Dalzell.

"After this war has been won by our side, but not before, I hope to find it possible to be a pacifist for at least a few years," smiled Darrin, rising from his seat at the chart table.

Dan stood looking out through the starboard porthole. His glance roved over other craft of war tugging at their anchors in the goodly harbor of a port on the coast of England. As the destroyer swung lazily at her moorings the little port town came into view. On all sides were signs of war. Forts upreared their grim walls. Earthen redoubts screened guns that alert artillerymen could bring into play at a moment's notice. Overhead, dirigibles floated and airplanes buzzed dinfully to and fro.

Readers of the preceding volume in this series know how Dave Darrin came to be ordered to the command of the brand-new, big and up-to-the-minute destroyer, "Asa Grigsby," while Dan Dalzell, reaching the grade of lieutenant-commander, had been ordered to the command of the twin destroyer, "Joseph Reed."

At the door there sounded a knock so insistent

that Darrin knew instantly that it was a summons. Springing from his chair, reaching for his uniform cap and setting it squarely on his head, he drew the curtains aside.

"Special signal for the 'Grigsby,' sir, from the flagship," reported an orderly.

Returning the young seaman's salute, Dave, with Dalzell close at his heels, darted up the steps to the bridge.

"Signal 'Ready to receive,' " was Darrin's command to his signalman, who stood waiting, signal flags in hand.

Rapidly the two flags moved, then paused. Dave's eyes, like Dan's, were turned toward the United States battleship that had lately acted as flagship for the destroyers and other small Yankee craft assembled in this port.

Brief indeed were the motions of the signalman on the bridge of the battleship, but the signal, translated, read:

"Proceed to sea in an hour, under instructions already received by you. Am proceeding to new station. Report to British admiral, this port, hereafter. No additions to these orders."

Instantly Darrin ordered the signal wigwagged back:

"Understood."

Immediately following this the flagship signalled the "Reed," Dan's ship, giving the same

order, which Dan's executive officer, from the bridge of the other destroyer, acknowledged.

"Now, Darry, if you'll have your man signal for my gig," Dan urged, in a low voice, "I'll return to my ship. You and I are to cruise in company, as far as it may be done, and you are ranking officer. I am to part company from you only on your order."

"That is the admiral's order," Darrin acquiesced.

"Good-bye, old chap!" said Dan, with more than his wonted fervor, gripping his brother officer's hand. "And may we have the best of luck!"

"The best of a 'business' kind," smiled Dave.

"That's it!" laughed Dan, as he started down the steps. "I'm hoping for 'big business' this time!"

Dalzell had used the word "gig" in a figurative sense. It was a power launch that put smartly away from the "Reed" and was speedily alongside. Dan waved his hand to his chum, who was leaning over the bridge rail.

Dave did not return to the chart-room. He received the report of his chief engineer at the bridge telephone, then gazed musingly out over the crowded waters of the port. It was a busy scene, bristling with war activities.

Having compared his watch with the clock on the bridge, Dave glanced frequently at that time-

keeper. Five minutes before the hour was up he gave a quiet order to the watch officer, who telephoned to the engine-room and then issued brisk deck orders. At this time Lieutenant Fernald, executive officer, joined the group on the bridge, as did also the navigation officer.

Promptly to the minute the "Grigsby," anchor up, turned and steamed slowly out of the harbor. As she passed, none of the other craft made signals. As though unnoticed Dave's ship slipped out of port, the "Reed" following.

Then out upon the Channel the two destroyers moved, into the lane now followed by all craft that sailed between England and the continent.

"All clear hereabouts," signalled the master of a small mine-sweeping craft, meaning that the destroyers, while in that immediate vicinity, might feel secure against the hidden mines with which the enemy were wont to strew these waters.

"A few miles from here," Dave murmured to Fernald, "we shall have to look after our own security. It is going to be lively work."

"Yes, sir?" Fernald inquired, with a rising inflection, for he did not know the purpose of this cruise.

Turning to make sure that the signalman could not overhear, Darrin went on, in a lower voice:

"Our orders take us out to wage war against the German mine-layers!"

"A great work, sir!" replied the executive officer with enthusiasm. "There is sure to be plenty of sport. Then the enemy mine-layers have been working more industriously of late?"

"The waters to the north are more thickly strewn with mines than at any time previously," Dave continued. "Six British mine-sweeping craft have been sent north to do all they can to remove those hidden perils from the paths of transports and freighters. Our first mission is to protect the mine-sweepers as far as possible, but we are also to keep a sharp lookout for German submarines, and especially submarines of the mine-laying kind."

"I understand, sir," Fernald nodded. The tone of enthusiasm had faded from his voice. Now he displayed only the grave interest of the professional sea-fighter.

"All officers and men will have to work twice as hard as usual," Darrin went on. "There will be some chance to sleep, but no other leisure. Meals will be taken in the least possible time. Our entire crew must be at all times ready for instant response to the call to quarters."

"That will not be hard in such times, sir," answered Fernald. "All officers and men laid in a good supply of sleep while in port. A few added waking hours in each day won't hurt any of us."

"Direct all officers to see that they and their men are fully awake and alert at all times when they are on duty," continued Dave. "Otherwise, we are not likely to make port again. Dalzell and I have been intrusted with keeping down the mine-laying peril as close to zero as possible."

"Very good, sir," replied Lieutenant Fernald. That capable executive officer had nothing more to say at present, for his quick mind was already devising methods for keeping the crew unusually alert.

An hour and a half after sailing night had settled down. The English shore was but a vague, distant line. A short, choppy sea was running. In the sky was a new moon that would set early.

The watch had changed, but Dave and his executive officer remained on the bridge. Down in the wardroom such officers as were off duty were stowing away food in record time.

Half a mile off to the west steamed the "Reed." Suddenly the lookouts on both craft reported a vessel ahead. Orders quietly given sent the men to gun stations. All eyes were turned on the approaching craft. Then her identification signal shone forth in the night. The stranger was a British scout cruiser racing back to port from some errand.

In almost the same instant Dave and Dan displayed recognition signals, yet the two Yankee

craft closely watched the stranger until she moved between them, when she was fully recognized as one of John Bull's friendly sea-racers.

"Any enemy signs?" Dave signalled.

"No," came the answer.

Soon the British scout cruiser had passed on into the night and vanished, but the Yankee lookouts kept vigil even more zealously than before.

Half an hour later an English patrol boat, after exchange of signals, passed near by on Dave's port side. Twenty minutes after that two British mine-sweepers were found at work combing the seas with their wire sweepers. If those wires should touch a hidden mine it would be quickly known to the seamen who operated the mine-detecting device, and the mine would be hauled up and taken aboard the mine-sweeping craft, provided it did not explode in the meantime.

As these two mine-sweepers were under Darrin's command, at need, he steamed near one of the pair, and, ordering a navy launch over the side, went to visit one of the Britons.

"There's not very much in the way of catches to-night, sir," reported the commander of the sweeper, a ruddy-faced, square-shouldered young Englishman in his twenties, who had been watch officer on a steamship at the outbreak of the war. "Sometimes the fishing is much better."

"This is the area in which we have been ordered to make a strict search," Dave observed.

"I know, sir. But, according to my experience, we may search for hours and find nothing at all, and then, of a sudden, run into a mine field and take up a score of the pests."

"What is your present course?"

The commander of the mine-sweeper named it, adding the distance he had been ordered to go.

"And the other sweeper sticks near by you?"

"Yes, sir. In that way there's a much better chance of one of us striking a regular mine field. Then again, sir, if one of us gets into trouble, as sometimes happens, the other craft can stand by promptly."

"What is the most common trouble?"

"First," explained the Englishman, "being torpedoed by a submarine; second, touching off a mine by bad handling; third, being sunk by some raiding German destroyer."

"Then you often hit mines?"

"Since the war began, sir," replied the young Englishman, "we've lost—" He named the number of mine-sweepers that had disappeared without leaving a trace, and the number that were definitely known to have been torpedoed or to have hit floating mines.

"As you see, sir," the Englishman went on, "it's no simple thing that we have to do. I lay

it to sheer luck that I've escaped so long, but my turn may come at any moment. I've lost a number of friends in this same branch of the service, sir."

"Then you would call mine-sweeping the most dangerous kind of naval service performed today?" Dave suggested.

"I don't know that I'd say that, sir, but it's dangerous enough."

Many more pointers did Darrin pick up from this young officer of long experience in mine-hunting.

"I'm going farther north," said Dave. "If you run into anything and need help, send up rocket signals and we'll steam back to you at top speed."

Before ten o'clock that night Darrin had encountered and spoken with or signalled to the commanders of not less than a dozen mine-sweeping craft. What struck Dave as the most prominent feature of these small, unpretentious craft was the slow, systematic way in which they performed their duty.

"It's a wonderful work," Dave explained to Fernald. "If it were not for these dingy, stub-nosed little craft, and the fine spirit of their crews, hundreds of steamships would probably be blown up in these waters in a month. The Hun sneaks through these waters, laying mines, mostly from

submarines built for the purpose, and these patient mine-sweeper commanders go along after them, removing most of the mines from the paths of navigation.

Having cruised as far north as his instructions directed him to do, Darrin ordered the "Grigsby" and the "Reed" to turn about and nose their way back under bare headway.

Every mine-sweeper carried a radio outfit for sending messages. Each craft was also supplied with the mast-head "blinkers" for flashing night signals. When the craft signalled to, however, was near enough, colored lights operated from the deck were used instead, that the messages might not be sent far enough into the night to be picked up by skulking enemy craft.

"It looks like a night of tame sport, sir," said Fernald, just before he went below for a nap.

"It has been quiet so far," Darrin agreed. "But the most striking thing in naval service is that whatever starts comes without warning. We might have a whole week as quiet as to-night has been, and then run into twenty-four hours of work that would give both of us gray hair."

An hour after Fernald went below Dave had a steamer chair brought to the bridge, also a rug. The chair was placed where a canvas wind-shield would protect the sitter from the keen edge of the wind.

"I'm going to doze right here, Mr. Ormsby," Dave explained to the ensign who was on bridge watch. "I'm to be called the instant anything turns up."

Accustomed to such sleeps Darrin had barely closed his eyes when he was off in the Land o' Nod. Some time afterwards the sharp orders of Ensign Andrews, new officer of the bridge watch, caused Darrin to open his eyes, cast aside the rug and spring to his feet all in the same instant.

"Torpedo coming on our starboard bow, sir," reported Mr. Andrews, turning and finding his chief at his post.

At that instant the "Grigsby" gave a sharp turn to port and sprang ahead under quickened speed.

Bump! Swift as the discovery had been made, quickly as the saving orders had been given, the oncoming torpedo bumped the hull of the "Grigsby" with a crash audible to those within a hundred feet of the point of impact. But it did not strike full on, the contact being only glancing, like that of a boat going alongside a landing stage. The watchers from the bridge saw the torpedo's wake as the deflected projectile continued on its harmless way.

"We couldn't have had a much narrower squeak than that!" Dave ejaculated. "Andrews, I congratulate you."

"I'm naturally interested in saving the ship, sir, and my own skin as well," replied Ensign Andrews with a grin.

Dave, not having taken his eyes from the faint streak on the water, called for highest speed and a complete turn. Then, ordering the rays of the searchlight to play over the water, Darrin sent the "Grigsby" racing, bow-on, toward the spot from which he judged the torpedo to have been launched. In the meantime Dalzell's "Reed" had turned her prow in the same general direction, steaming slowly after the "Grigsby."

"The Hun can't be located," Dave confessed, a few minutes later. "That chap is like most of the other Hun submarine commanders. He'll launch a torpedo by stealth, but as soon as he knows the destroyer is after him he hunts depth and runs away."

Dave's next order was to send a wireless message, warning all mine-sweepers and other craft that an enemy submarine had been discovered in that location.

Though no word had been passed for Lieutenant Fernald, that executive officer, awakened by the bump and the abrupt change in the destroyer's course, hurried to the bridge.

"Did you get a good rest, Fernald?" Dave queried, half an hour later.

"Fine, sir."

"Then I am going to the chart-room to rest for a while. I got chilled dozing in that chair. Set the bell going in the chart-room if I'm wanted."

Then Dave slept on, without call, for a few hours, well knowing that Lieutenant Fernald could well fill his place. The first signs of dawn awakened Darrin. He sprang up, reaching for the bridge telephone.

"All secure, sir," reported Fernald, from the bridge.

Dave therefore delayed long enough to make his toilet — a none too frequent luxury aboard a destroyer in the danger zone. Then, fully refreshed and ruddy, Darrin drew on his tunic and over that his sheepskin coat. Placing his uniform cap on his head he stepped out on deck before the sun had begun to rise up above the sea.

In the distance, in three different directions, as many British mine-sweepers could be seen patiently combing the seas for mines.

"What number recovered?" Dave signalled.

"Three," replied one craft. "Five," said another. "One," came from the third sweeper.

"Nine in all," Dave remarked to Fernald. "We're in a mine field, then. We shall need to be vigilant."

The sun soon rose, strong and brilliant, only to pass behind a bank of clouds and leave the air

damp and chilly. An hour later a fog settled over the English Channel, soon becoming so dense that one could not see beyond about three hundred yards.

Dave went below to a hurried breakfast. Returning, he sent Lieutenant Fernald to his meal and rest.

"I'll remain on the bridge all day, unless this fog lifts," Darrin decided. He increased the number of lookouts and ordered slow speed, so that the long, narrow destroyer, capable of racing rapidly over the waves, now merely crept along.

When the watch was changed Dave barely returned the salutes of the departing and oncoming watch officers, for his whole attention was centered on the sea. Half an hour after that he started slightly, then stared hard.

Off the starboard bow he thought he made out something moving as slowly as the "Grigsby" herself was proceeding.

"Pick that up, Mr. Ormsby, and see if it's anything more than a dream," ordered Dave, pointing.

Instantly the course of the destroyer was changed several points to starboard and speed increased a trifle.

Through the haze there soon developed the outlines of a steam craft, set low in the water, and of not more than two thousand tons. She was not

a handsome craft, but, on the contrary, appeared ghostlike as she stood only half-revealed through the fog.

Undoubtedly the stranger had a lookout up forward, but no sign of one could be made out as the "Grigsby" gained on her.

Her markings indicated that she belonged to one of the neutral countries to the northward. The wet flag that she flew drooped so tightly around the staff that nothing could be learned from that bit of bunting.

"One of the neutral traders," remarked Ensign Ormsby.

"She must give an account of herself," Dave answered. "Whatever she is, or carries, she doesn't look like a craft to be entrusted with a valuable cargo."

As the "Grigsby" ranged up alongside, an officer stepped out from the stranger's wheelhouse and came to the rail.

"What craft is that?" Dave demanded.

The skipper, if such he was, replied in broken English, naming a neutral country, and adding that the vessel was the "Olga," bound for an English port with a cargo of wood pulp.

"I knew she couldn't carry a costly cargo," Dave muttered, then commanded, through a megaphone:

"Lie to and stand by to be inspected."

"Vat?" demanded the foreign skipper, in evident amazement.

Dave repeated the order.

"But ve all right are," insisted the skipper, "vot I told you iss our cargo."

"Lie to, just the same," Dave commanded. "We'll be aboard at once."

That made the skipper angry, but he dared not resist. The muzzles of two of the "Grigsby's" three-inch guns were pointed straight at him now, so the clumsy craft stopped and lay tossing on the choppy sea.

Ensign Burton and a boarding crew were told off for one of the power launches. At the last instant Dave decided to go with the party and took his place in the launch. He was first aboard the stranger when the launch had been made fast alongside.

It was now a younger officer who met him at the rail.

"Where is your skipper?" Darrin demanded.

"He me has given der papers to you show," replied the younger officer. "Come mit me to der cabin, please."

"I must see this craft's master, and at once," Darrin insisted.

"He here cannot be at dis minute," replied the foreign mate. "To de cabin mit me come, please."

"Your cargo is wood pulp, you say?" Dave continued.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"In our hold, already, sir," answered the mate.

"Throw off that hatch," Dave directed, pointing. "I am going to inspect your cargo."

The hatch was promptly uncovered. Leaving Burton and his men on deck, Dave descended into the hold by a ladder, followed by the mate and two of the "Olga's" seamen. A brief inspection proved that the hold was well filled with a cargo of wood pulp.

"Now, you vill go to de after hold, please?" asked the mate, as Darrin climbed up to the deck.

"Yes," Dave nodded, and went aft, followed by four of his men, while Burton and the others remained forward. Here in the after hold the same kind of cargo was found. The "Olga" looked like a straight enough craft, but there was something in the manner of the mate that made Darrin suspicious.

Calling two of his seamen below Dave produced a tape measure.

"Get the distance from the hatchway to the after end of this hold," he directed.

Then, wheeling, he noted that the mate's face had turned to a greenish color.

"What ails you, man?" Darrin demanded, eyeing the fellow sharply.

"N-n-nutten, sir," stammered the mate.

One of the seamen reported the measurement he had taken.

"Now, go on deck and measure aft from the hatchway," Dave commanded.

The instant that Darrin was left alone with the mate a pair of muscular arms encircled the throat of the young American naval commander from behind. In the same instant the mate sprang at him. The two assailants, taking him so by surprise, overcame Darrin with comparative ease. In the same moment they backed him through a small doorway opening into the hold forward.

Down on his back Dave Darrin was thrown, the skipper sitting on his chest, while the mate swiftly drew the door to and securely bolted it. In this stuffy apartment, lighted only by two swinging lanterns, Darrin realized that he must fight promptly if he expected to escape.

A steel tube was pressed against one of Dave's temples, while a hoarse, low voice proclaimed:

"Say a vord, and you die shall!"

It was the skipper who was holding a revolver to Darrin's head, and the returning mate bent over with an iron hatch bar in his right hand.

"You do vill vat we tell you — yes!" insisted the skipper, his breath coming fast.

CHAPTER II

"THE ACCURSED POWER OF GOLD!"

DAVE made no struggle.

"You're a pair of fools!" he declared, somewhat hoarsely, for the effects of the severe choking were still present.

"Fools, maybe," assented the skipper of the "Olga." "But if ve must trouble have den you die shall."

"What do you want me to do?" Darrin demanded.

"You send your men to your ship back," declared the big fellow. "Den your ship it must out of sight go yet. Ve shall sail back vonce. If your ship, or any udder ship to stop us try, den you die shall already — on deck, in sight your friends of."

"You big chump!" uttered Darrin.

"Vy you call me dot?"

"Because, no matter what you do or don't do to me, you are going to be taken and punished. Do you think my ship would sail without me?"

"Maybe, sooner dan see you killed vonce," glowered the skipper of the "Olga."

"You idiot, my subordinates, their suspicions aroused, are bound to take this craft, no matter what happens to me. They must do their duty without consideration for my safety."

"So?" uttered the skipper, looking at Dave dully.

"So!" Darrin assured him.

"But den you die must vonce."

"Go ahead and kill me," Darrin dared him.

"But if you vill to reason yet listen — "

"You're wasting time and breath," Darrin assured him, coolly.

Just then something happened. Darrin, using a trick that he had learned on the wrestling mat and had since perfected, threw both his arms around the left arm of the "Olga's" skipper. Clasping his hands and pressing his arms against the skipper's left arm, Dave gave a great heave and rolled to his own left. The trick depended upon speed.

The skipper crashed over on his head. The revolver was discharged in the overturn, but the bullet went wild.

In the twinkling of an eye Dave had grabbed the weapon, and leaped to his feet just in time to dodge the hatch bar that the mate tried to smash down on his head.

"Back, unless you want yours right now!" Darrin challenged. Swiftly he changed the revolver

into his left hand as he still covered the pair. Then he reached for his own automatic, throwing off the safety device.

"Now, you, Mr. Mate, slip around and unbolt the door, throwing it open," Dave ordered. "Any sign of a trick will end your life on the spot!"

Seemingly cowed, the mate obeyed.

"Open the door — throw it wide open," Dave commanded.

The door was thrust ajar just as the two seamen with the tape reached the bottom of the ladder coming from the deck. These two seamen stared in astonishment at the stuffy apartment off the after hold.

"Men, take charge of these two rascals!" Darrin commanded, briskly. "Step lively, both of you!" — this last to skipper and mate, who obeyed as though dazed.

"Pass them up on deck as prisoners," ordered Darrin, and this was done, the two seamen drawing their revolvers and standing by the "Olga's" discomfited officers.

"Now, for your report," Darrin went on. One of the sailors reported the deck-length from hatchway to stern-post.

"A difference of twenty-one feet," smiled Dave, darkly, pointing aft in the hold. "You see, men, there are a good many feet of length to be accounted for, which means that there is another

compartment aft of this hold. "You," turning to one of the sailors, "go forward and request Ensign Burton, with my compliments, to take charge of this steamer. He will round up the crew and place them under guard. Then the ensign will leave a petty officer in charge of deck and prisoners and report to me here."

Within a very short time Mr. Burton had so reported. Dave, in the meantime, having worked his way over the cargo, had found a cleverly concealed door at the after end of the hold.

"There should be a key to this door, sir," said Ensign Burton, "but if there is a key-hole we are unable to find it. If this really be a door it must be operated by a hidden spring."

"Perhaps an axe will work as well as either key or spring," Darrin suggested. "Pass the word for one."

The axe was brought by a heavily built seaman, who prepared to swing it against the door panelling.

"Break away the boards as gently as possible," continued Dave. "There may be an explosive device on the other side of the panelling. For that reason I'll stand by you, to take equal risk."

"If there is any risk, I'd rather you wouldn't take it, sir," urged the sailor.

"Thank you, but I'll stand by. Swing the axe," ordered Dave.

A few blows knocked in the panelling, revealing, beyond, a room of considerable size. Into this stepped the two officers, followed by the seamen with them. Unlike any part of the ship they had previously seen, this place was lighted by electricity. Burton found the switch, and turning it on, let in a flood of light.

"Sir, did you ever!" gasped the ensign.

The purpose of this room was all too plain. It was fitted with compressors, leading to a tube that left the ship under water. A small but powerful crane was in place over a closed hatchway. The latter, when opened, was found to lead down into a second hold, also electrically lighted. The two officers explored this second hold.

"Mines were kept here," Dave nodded, "and were hoisted above as needed. They were dropped astern by means of a compressed air apparatus which, when the mine tube was open, kept the sea from entering. This ugly looking little steamer, outwardly a wood pulp carrier, is really a very capable mine-layer. She has been busy, too, on this cruise to England, but had sown all her mines before we overhauled her."

"It's plain enough, sir," agreed Ensign Burton.

"Confound this rascally skipper!" blazed Darrin, wrathfully. "While naval craft have been searching everywhere for submarine mine-layers, this skipper has been sailing openly on the seas

and sowing mines right under the eyes of our allies! The accursed power of gold! This skipper, his mate and crew have been selling their very souls to the Hun for a bit of his miserable money!"

"They won't do it again, sir!" uttered Burton, grimly.

"Mr. Burton, you will remain aboard as prize officer, and take the 'Olga' into the nearest British port and turn her over to the British Admiralty authorities. On receiving competent orders you will rejoin."

"Very good, sir."

"And now we'll hurry above and try to get hold of this ship's papers before any rascal has a chance to destroy them."

Boatswain's Mate Runkle had kept the officers and crew of the "Olga" under such close guard that they were unable to get at their papers, which were quickly found by Darrin in the cabin to which he had first been invited on boarding the "Olga."

Out on deck, herded forward, were master and mate, seamen, engineers and stokers, a motley-looking outfit of twenty-one men all told.

"Bring that fellow here," Dave directed, coming on deck after having examined the ship's papers and then turning them over to Ensign Burton.

The master, purple-faced and ugly-looking, his eyes cast down, was brought before Darrin.

"Well, sir," announced Dave Darrin, eyeing the man grimly, "we have seen the cargo you have on board, and we have been able to judge the character of the cargo that you have dropped overboard."

The skipper started, but did not make any reply in words.

"How could you ever bring yourself to commit such villainy?" Darrin demanded, sternly. "You are not a German?"

"No," assented the other, shifting his weight from his right foot to his left.

"You are a subject of a neutral country."

"Dot is true," admitted the skipper.

"And yet, for hire, you and your men have been engaged in sowing mines, and have taken pay from Germany for your crimes."

"Mines? No! Ve do it not any. Ve never any had," declared the skipper.

"Tell that to an Admiralty court-martial," Darrin retorted. "You will have difficulty in clearing yourself. Fellow, you will find that you and your men will be charged with piracy, for you have been sowing death and destruction in the seas. Indeed, there can be no estimating how many ships you have already helped send to the bottom, no guessing how many lives your in-

famous work has cost. And you a neutral! Piracy!"

Skipper, mate and chief engineer turned pale at this significant speech. The rest of the crew looked on in stolid wonder, for they understood no word of English.

"Vat? You proof it can't!" quivered the skipper.

"Wait!"

Dave gave Ensign Burton an order in an undertone. The ensign hurried to the bridge and almost immediately from the "Olga's" whistle a series of sharp blasts struck out on the air.

From the distance came an answering whistle. The "Olga's" whistle sounded again, and continued at minute intervals, until the outlines of another craft came up out of the mist and proved to be one of the mine-sweepers.

Dave had already reasoned out the probable course of the neutral country's freighter in the last hour before he had overhauled it. As the mine-sweeper slowly came abreast, Darrin, a megaphone at his lips, shouted an order for the course to be taken by his small helper, and added:

"Sweep thoroughly, and try to find some mines near by."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Within fifteen minutes a distant whistle came up from the fog.

"They've picked up one mine," Darrin announced.

Ten minutes later the sweeper's signal whistle was repeated.

"Two mines," he added, and the "Olga's" skipper shivered slightly.

Twenty minutes later came a whistle that was barely heard.

"Three mines," clicked Dave, and ordered the recall sounded, to be by direction signals at minute intervals.

"You make dot noise too much den have us all torpedoed yet," protested the "Olga's" skipper.

"If that happens, we have a rescue craft near at hand," retorted Darrin, meaning the "Grigsby," though the destroyer was now hidden by the fog. "That was more than you knew when you planted mines to destroy vessels on the high seas."

"I did noddings do," growled the skipper.

In time the mine-sweeper came up into view, again reporting that she had picked up three mines by sweeping broadly over the course that the "Olga" was believed to have taken. Then a junior officer from the sweeper came aboard with the measurements of the captured mines. These dimensions were quickly found to correspond with those of the planting device installed in the secret compartment of the "Olga."

"Which proves, or doesn't prove, that the

'Olga' sowed the mines," Dave declared. "That remains for the court-martial to decide. But the three mines just swept up will be interesting evidence for the court to consider."

Learning that the commander of the minesweeper would be glad to furnish some members for a prize crew, and to convoy the prize into port, Dave decided to leave Ensign Burton aboard with only three men from the "Grigsby," filling out the prize crew with English sailors. This was accordingly done. Dave's own ship was then signalled and located by whistle, and the launch started on its return.

"Keep that captured crew under strict guard. Don't give them any chance to recapture their vessel!" was Dave's last warning to Ensign Burton.

The "Olga" quickly faded away in the fog and then the "Grigsby" was picked up and boarded.

"Great work, sir, I'd call it!" declared Lieutenant Fernald, when he heard the details of what had taken place.

"The scoundrel, to sail as a neutral, and do such dirty work for the Huns for mere pay!" uttered Dave, indignantly. "Fernald, do you know that there were moments when I had to restrain myself to keep from kicking that scoundrel about his own deck?"

"I can understand the temptation," nodded the executive officer.

"On second thought, though," Darrin continued, "the skipper is certainly being much worse punished by the suspense of mind in which his present plight places him. He knows that, if convicted, the finding of the court will be 'piracy,' and he knows the punishment for that crime."

"It used to be hanging," nodded Fernald. "It seems almost a pity that this war has introduced the swifter and more merciful punishment of death by shooting."

"And as he looks around at his crew he knows that they must face the same fate with him, and he knows, too, that they know that he has brought the penalty upon them."

"But is it possible that the crew were ignorant, or most of them ignorant, of what he was doing in addition to really carrying wood pulp cargoes?" asked Fernald.

"That will be another question for the court-martial to decide," Darrin answered. "It doesn't seem possible that any member of the crew could really be in ignorance of the mine-laying work."

A long blast from either the invisible "Olga" or the equally invisible mine-sweeper now announced that the prize was proceeding on her way. The "Grigsby" did not answer, for on a

sea infested by hidden enemies it was not wise to use too many whistle signals.

The "Grigsby" now returned to her course and former speed, and again started on her way. Barely ten minutes had passed when from a bow lookout came the sharp hail:

"'Ware submarine, dead ahead, sir!"

Sharp eyes, indeed, that had made out the presence of the enemy craft by sighting the slender, almost pencil-like periscope that projected some few feet above the water.

At the instant it was discovered the periscope sank down below the surface.

CHAPTER III

A FIGHT OF THE GOOD OLD KIND

FULL speed ahead! Then ahead she leaped. Ere the destroyer had gained full momentum her bow struck something under the water. Men were thrown from their feet by force of the shock, and the destroyer lurched heavily.

"Hope we haven't torn our bottom out," muttered Darrin as he joined the bow lookouts.

On the water appeared a patch of oil which

rapidly broadened. A wooden stool and other floating objects were visible.

"That looks like a fair score," declared the young lieutenant-commander, at which the onlooking seamen grinned broadly.

Over the spot the destroyer again steamed, but nothing passing under her keel was noticed. The sea was clear before her.

It was hours later when Darrin received, in a special code of the British Admiralty, word that the "Olga" and her convoy had reached port, and the "Olga's" officers and crew had been turned over to the Admiralty officials.

In the meantime Dan Dalzell and the "Reed," as learned by occasional wireless messages, had been separated at no time by more than two miles, though neither craft was visible from the other.

Towards the end of the afternoon the fog began to lift. By nightfall it had disappeared. The stars came out and the crescent moon hung near the western horizon. Both destroyers had again turned north, the two craft having drawn in within half a mile of each other.

Dave, after a two-hour nap, went to the bridge at about two bells — nine o'clock. He had been there some ten minutes, chatting with Ensign Ormsby in low tones, when of a sudden he broke off, listening intently.

"Sounds like distant firing, sir, two points off the port bow," hailed one of the bow lookouts.

In a silence, broken only by the wash of the waters and the jar of the engines, distant rumbling sounds were again heard.

"That's gun-fire," Dave declared. "Mr. Ormsby, have the signals shown so that word may be conveyed to the 'Reed' to keep with us at full speed."

In another moment both destroyers dashed forward with a great roaring of machinery and dense clouds of smoke trailing behind from the four stacks of each.

When some miles had been covered, with the gun-fire sounding with much greater distinctness, Darrin felt that he could judge the distance properly. Turning on a screened light he consulted the chart.

"It's just about there," Darrin declared, placing his finger on a spot on the map. "Ormsby, I believe that enemy craft are bombarding the little fishing village of Helston. It's an unfortified, small port."

"That's the kind the Huns would prefer," returned the ensign, with a savage smile.

"Ask the chief engineer if a bit more speed is obtainable; then sound the bell in Mr. Fernald's cabin."

A knot an hour more was soon forced from the

"Grigsby's" engines, though at that racing gait it would have been difficult for an amateur observer to have detected the fact that speed had been gained. The "Reed," too, leaped forward.

Minute after minute of breathless racing followed. Presently the flashes of guns could be made out ahead against the darkness of the night. Helston showed no lights, but the sound of bursting shells located the fishing village to those on the bridges of the approaching destroyers.

"The hounds!" blazed Dave, indignantly. "Up to their old and favorite game of killing defenseless people!"

Long ago the crew had been called to quarters. Everything was in readiness to attack the enemy.

"Three of them, and all destroyers, judging by the size of the flash of their guns," Darrin judged.

Throughout the war it has been a favorite trick of the enemy, when the opportunity offered, to send these swift craft out on night attacks. No other craft on the seas, except Entente destroyers, are capable of pursuing and overtaking German destroyers when they flee.

"Open fire when we do," was the signal flashed to the "Reed."

"We're ready," came back the instant answer.

Two minutes later one of Darrin's forward guns flashed out into the night. From the "Reed" there came a similar flash.

"Let 'em have it, fast and hard!" ordered Dave.

As the two destroyers sprang forward, firing at full capacity, the three German craft turned and steamed toward them.

"They outnumber us, and think we'll turn tail!" exulted Dave. "They may sink us, but if we do go down at least we'll try to carry our own weight in enemy ships down with us!"

Though he did not make an unnecessary movement, all of Darrin's calm had vanished. He watched every one of the "Grigsby's" shots, his eyes flashing, breath indrawn. When he saw a hit his glance was snapping. Many of the shells, however, splashed in the water only, for now the five engaged craft were circling about each other in a life-and-death struggle.

As they circled and zigzagged the German craft did not offer a very certain mark. Darrin and Dalzell were maneuvering in similar fashion.

"If we lose, we lose gamely," thought Fernald under his breath. "Was there ever a better or braver commander than Darry? He will ask no odds, but is ever willing to give them!"

"Ah!" The exclamation, half sigh, broke from Dave's lips as he saw the burst of flame and smoke as a shell landed on the superstructure of the leading German destroyer.

Then another shell from the "Grigsby" struck the same enemy's mast, smashing the crow's-nest

and hurling German seamen, dead or crippled, into the sea.

Three enemy shells landed on the "Grigsby," causing no serious damage. But the fourth hit dismounted one of Darrin's forward guns, killing three men and wounding five. Hardly an instant later another German shell landed on the bridge, reducing some of the metal work to a mass of twisted junk and ripping out part of the deck.

Shell fragments and flying splinters flew on all sides, yet out of this hurricane of destruction emerged Darrin, Fernald and the watch officer, all uninjured.

An instant later Darrin shouted his orders in Fernald's ear, then gained the deck below in a series of leaps.

With one of her forward guns dismounted, the "Grigsby" was to that extent out of business. Preferring not to trust to his torpedo tubes, at this juncture Darrin raced aft, just as the destroyer began to execute a swift turn.

And now Dave's craft turned tail and ran for it, the young commander directing personally the service of the after guns as the foremost German destroyer gave chase.

Two more hits were scored by the enemy, with the result that two more of Dave's hardy young seamen were killed and four wounded. Matters were beginning to look decidedly serious.

As for Dan Dalzell, when he saw the "Grigsby" turn tail and flee, his heart gave a great bound.

"Good old Darry didn't do that unless he had to," Dan told himself. "I must cover his retreat somehow."

So, his guns barking, and men standing by at the torpedo tubes, Dalzell darted straight for the second of the German destroyers.

Fortunately there was plenty of sea-room, for Dave Darrin was not in reality running away. He was still alert to win the fight, but he wanted to win with the smallest possible loss among his own men.

The Hun craft pursuing him was the slowest of the three enemies. This Dave had already guessed. He allowed the other craft to gain for half a mile, then suddenly shot ahead. By this time several hits had been scored by both combatants, and the third enemy destroyer was maneuvering for a position from which she could render herself effective to send Darrin and his men to the bottom.

Just when it happened Lieutenant Fernald hardly knew, but once more Darrin stood on the bridge at his side.

"Circle!" Dave shouted. "The shortest circle we can make, so as not to show our broadside longer than we must."

Running under full speed, and with a helm

that she minded, the "Grigsby" swung around. So unlooked for was this maneuver that the pursuing Hun craft did not succeed in making a direct hit on the Yankee ship during the turn.

And then, just as the turn brought him where he wished to be, and at deadly close quarters, Darrin gave his next order.

Forward leaped the American destroyer. Too late the astonished German commander saw the purpose of the maneuver.

With knife-like prow the "Grigsby" crashed into the German vessel, the blow striking just forward of amidships.

As the butcher's cleaver passes through the bone, so did the bow of the Yankee destroyer go through the Hun.

Yet in the moment of impact Darrin rang the bridge signal to the engine-room for full speed astern. Nor was this command executed an instant too soon. Just in the nick of time Dave's gallant little ship drew back out of the fearful hole that she had torn in the enemy.

Aboard the Hun craft the yells of dying men rose on the air, for the enemy destroyer had been all but cut in two.

Listing before an irresistible inrush of water, the German destroyer almost turned turtle, then sank quickly beneath the waves.

To the northward a muffled roar sounded, fol-

lowed instantly by another. Dalzell had let go with both forward torpedo tubes, and both had scored. The second stricken enemy ship began to fill and sink slowly.

"Shall we stop to pick up men?" called Fernald.

"Too bad, but we cannot linger while one of the enemy craft still floats," Darrin replied, calmly. "Our first business is to sink enemy ships. We cannot be humane just yet. Give full chase, Mr. Fernald!"

The German survivor had already turned tail, for these Yankee fighters were altogether too swift in their style of combat. Dalzell, whose craft was nearer the fugitive, was now first in pursuit.

To avoid firing over his chum's craft Darrin steered obliquely to starboard, then joined in the chase, firing frequently with his remaining forward three-inch gun.

As to speed it proved a losing race. The German craft that had survived proved to be a shade more speedy than either the "Grigsby" or the "Reed," so the two craft in chase endeavored to make up for the difference with active fire.

Some direct hits were made. In a little more than half an hour, however, the Hun destroyer was out of range of the Yankee guns.

"We'll drive her back to her base port, anyway," Darrin signalled Dalzell.

So two narrow ribbons of searchlight glow played over the sea, keeping the enemy in sight as long as possible.

Presently the German's hull vanished below the horizon; then the lower parts of her masts and stacks went out of sight. Still the two Yankee destroyers hung on, in a race that they knew they could not win.

Only when Darrin's knowledge of these waters told him that the fleeing destroyer was safe did he signal the "Reed" to "abandon chase."

Reluctantly Dan Dalzell's little ship swung around, heading to keep the "Grigsby" company on the new course.

"Tackled superior numbers, and sank two out of three," Dave commented, calmly. "Not what one would call a poor evening's work, gentlemen."

"It was splendidly done, sir," glowed Lieutenant Fernald.

"We won't take too much credit to ourselves," Dave proposed. "Let us give some of the credit to luck."

"Not with you in command, sir," protested the executive officer.

"But we did have a lot of luck," Dave insisted.

"The luck that you planned and schemed for, with your mind working like lightning," Fernald retorted.

He was too much of a man to try to flatter his

chief. Fernald spoke from the depths of complete conviction. He had known Dave Darrin's reputation at sea even before he had come to serve under this swift-thinking young officer.

Dave's first care, now, was to inspect the dismounted gun. Only a few moments did he need to convince himself that the piece was a wreck that could never be put in use again.

He then descended to the sick bay, where the surgeon and four baymen were giving tender attention to the wounded men.

"It was a good fight, men," Dave said, as he passed through the bay.

"Then I'm not kicking at what I found," cried one young sailor lad, cheerily.

"Nor I," added another. "It was worth something, sir, to take part in a fight like that. Ouch! O-o-o-h!"

Dave paused to bend over the sufferer, resting a hand on his nearer shoulder.

"I beg pardon, sir," said the lad. "I didn't mean to make such a fuss. You'll think me a regular baby, sir."

"No one is to be blamed for yelling, with a pair of shell fragment wounds like yours," broke in the surgeon, bending over and examining. "My boy, you have regular man's-size wounds."

"Not going to croak me, are you, sir?" asked the young sailor, looking up into Medico's eyes.

"Oh, no; not this trip, my lad."

"Then I don't care," returned the young seaman. "Wouldn't care much, anyway, but there's a mother at home who would! Ouch! There I go again. My mother'd be ashamed of me."

"No, she wouldn't," smiled the surgeon. "Look here, what I took out of that hole in your leg."

He held up a jagged fragment of shell. It was somewhat oval-shaped, about an inch and a half in length and half as wide.

"It hurt you more when I took that out than it would to pull a dozen of your teeth at once. Let's look at this other hole, the one on the other thigh. That's going to be a tougher job. I'll give you a few whiffs of chloroform, so you won't notice anything."

"Do I have to have the chloroform, sir?" demanded the sailor lad, who was not more than eighteen.

"You don't have to, Bassett, but it will be for your comfort," replied Medico.

"Then don't ask me to smell the stuff, sir. When this war is over I want to look back and think of myself as a fighting man — not as a chap who had to be gassed every time the sawbones looked at him. Beg your pardon, sir."

But Medico merely smiled at being called sawbones.

"Chloroform or not, just as you like, lad," the

surgeon went on. "Either way, you can always look back with satisfaction on your record as a fighting man, for your grit is all of the right kind."

"Much obliged to you, sir, for saying that," replied the young sailor. "Ouch! Wait, please, sir. Let me get a grip on the cot frame with both hands. Now, I'm all ready, sir."

"Same old breed of Yankee sailor as always," Darrin smiled down into the lad's face while the surgeon began the painful work of extracting another shell fragment. This one being more deeply imbedded, the surgeon was obliged to make a selection of scalpel and tissue scissors and do some nerve-racking cutting. But the seaman, his hands tightly gripped on the edges of the operating table, which he had termed a cot, did not once cry out, though ice-cold sweat beaded his forehead under Darrin's warm hand.

Then a bayman washed down the enameled surface of the table, rinsing the blood away, and another attendant skilfully dressed and bandaged the second wound as he had done the first. Two baymen brought a stretcher and the lad was taken to a bunk. Here he was given a drink that, after five minutes, caused him to doze and dream fitfully of the battle through which he had lately passed.

By this time nearly all of the wounded had re-

ceived first attention. Dave Darrin, followed by a junior officer, went forward to another, still smaller room, where he gazed down with heaving breast at the forms of the seamen who had given up their lives under the Stars and Stripes in the gallant work of that night.

Over the face of each dead man lay a cloth. Each cloth was removed in turn by a sailor as Darrin passed along.

"A good fighting man and a great romp on shore," said Dave, looking down at the face of one man. "One of the best fellows we ever had on any ship I've ever served on," he said, glancing at another face. "A new lad," he said, of a third, "but he joined on so recently that I know only that he was a brave young American!" And so on.

It was just as the sailor was laying the cloth back over the features of the last one in the row that a seaman sprang into the room precipitately.

"Beg pardon, sir," he called excitedly, "but telephone message, with compliments of executive officer, and commanding officer's presence is desired on the bridge — instantly!"

That surely meant business!

CHAPTER IV

WHAT A FLOATING MINE DID

AS Dave reached the deck he caught a fleeting glimpse of a big steamship ahead, which was revealed in the glare of the destroyer's searchlight.

But he did not stop to linger there. Up to the damaged bridge he ran as fast as he could go.

Evidently putting on her best effort at speed the steamship was moving forward fast in a zigzagging course.

"She was working her radio and blowing her whistle, all in the same moment, sir," Lieutenant Fernald explained. "She must have seen a torpedo that passed by her. There must be a submarine somewhere, but we haven't picked up a sign of it as yet."

The ship was nearly two miles away. Having seen the destroyer's searchlight the big craft's whistle was again blowing.

"Her master hardly expects to get away from the submarine," Dave observed, and instantly turned his night glass on the dark waters to try to pick up some sign of the Hun pirate craft that

was causing all this excitement aboard a respectable neutral liner.

"She's a Dutch craft," Dave commented. "Head in, Mr. Fernald, as that will give us a better chance to try to find out on which side of her the pest is operating. Ask her which side."

Promptly the signal flashed out from the blinkers of the "Grigsby." Plainly the excited skipper of the liner hadn't thought of offering that important bit of information.

"Starboard side, probably eight hundred yards away," came back the Dutchman's blinker response.

Dave accordingly ordered the "Grigsby" laid over to starboard and raced on to place the Yankee ship between the pirate and the intended victim.

Hardly had the course been altered, however, in the roughening sea, when a dull lurid flash some twelve or fifteen feet high was seen just under the liner's starboard bow. A cloud of smoke rose, the lower half of which was promptly washed out by a rising wave.

"That was a mine, no torpedo!" cried Dave, his eyes snapping. "Full speed ahead, Mr. Fernald, and prepare to clear away our launches. That ship cannot float long!"

Through the night glass it could be seen that throngs of passengers were rushing about the

deck of the Dutch vessel. Ship's officers were trying to quell the panic that was quite natural, for the mine, if it were such a thing, had torn a huge hole in the bow, and the liner was settling by the head.

Up raced the "Grigsby," the "Reed" arriving less than a minute afterward. Both destroyers had manned their launches, and these were now lowered and cleared away.

Even though the passengers appeared to have lost their heads, the Dutch skipper proved true to his trust. He was lowering his own boats and rafts as rapidly as he could, and making swift work of getting human beings away from the stricken ship.

Fully two-score passengers of either sex jumped. Striking the water they bobbed up again, for they had not neglected their life-belts.

In the hurry one lifeboat was overturned just before it reached the water. The "Grigsby's" leading launch raced to the spot. Half a dozen jackies promptly dove over into the icy water to give a hand to passengers too frightened to realize the importance of getting quickly away from the sinking liner.

"No more men go overboard," sternly ordered Ensign Andrews, as he saw more of his men moving to the side of the launch. "Stand by to haul the rescued aboard!"

All care was needed, for the liner was a big one, and doomed soon to take her final plunge. The suction effect on small boats would be tremendous, if they were caught too close to the scene of the foundering.

Lines were cast to jackies who were towing frightened passengers. Rescue moved along swiftly, the launches from both destroyers backing slowly away from the settling craft.

"Here y'are, lady!" coaxed one seaman from the first launch, catching a line at twenty feet and placing it in the hands of a frightened woman whose teeth chattered and who was nearly dead from the cold that the icy water sent through to the marrow of her bones. "Think y' can hold on, lady? If y' can, I can go back and help some one else."

The woman, though she spoke no English, guessed the meaning of the question, and shrieked with terror.

"Oh, all right, ma'am," the sailor went on, in a tone of good-humored resignation. "I'll make sure of you, and hope that some one else won't drown."

With one arm around her, the other hand holding tight to the rope the jacky allowed himself to be hauled in alongside the launch.

"Take this lady in, quick!" ordered Jacky. "She's about all in with the cold."

"Better come on board, too, Streeter," advised a petty officer on the launch.

"Too much to be done," replied Seaman Streeter, shoving off and starting to swim back.

"Your teeth are chattering now," called the petty officer, but Seaman Streeter, with lusty strokes, was heading for a hatless, white-haired old man whom he made out, under the searchlight glare, a hundred yards away. This man, too chilled to swim for himself, though buoyed up by a belt, Streeter brought in.

"Come on board, Streeter," insisted the same petty officer.

But surely that jacky was deaf, for he turned and once more struck out. By the time that the liner had been down four minutes, and the last visible and living person in the water had been rescued, Seaman Streeter had brought in six men and women, five of whom would surely have died of the cold had he not gone to their aid. And he had turned to swim back after a possible seventh.

Nearly six hundred passengers and members of the sunken liner's crew had been saved. Of these the greatest sufferers were taken aboard the "Grigsby" and the "Reed" and the remainder were left in the boats, which were towed astern.

Dave decided that the rescued ones should be landed at an English port twenty-two miles away. This port had rail communication and prompt,

effective care could be given to these hundreds of people.

As soon as the start had been made for port, roll-call was held of those who had put off in the launches. Seaman Streeter was not present, nor even accounted for. Promptly Darrin ordered the course changed and the two destroyers went back, making careful search under the search-lights of the surface of the sea near the scene of the foundering. No trace of the missing seaman was found.

Seaman Streeter did not die in battle. He perished in the gentler but no less useful field of saving human life! An orphaned sister in Iowa, his only living near relative, gazes to-day at the appreciative letter she has received from the Navy Department at Washington. Then she turns to a longer and more glowing letter written by the, to her, strange hand of David Darrin, Lieutenant-Commander, United States Navy.

In less than two hours the destroyers, with their respective strings of towed boats, arrived at the British port and the work of transferring the rescued to shore began. Dan's dead and wounded were also sent ashore.

It was afterward reported that nine human beings were unaccounted for. Four more died in the boats on the way to land.

While the transfers to shore were being made

Dan Dalzell came aboard the "Grigsby" to greet his chum. They chatted while the damaged bridge was being repaired.

"Danny-boy," Dave remarked seriously, "that exploding mine showed us clearly what is expected of us. It is our task to see that all these near-by waters are cleared of such dangerous objects."

"Surely we cannot get every mine that the Huns plant," objected Dalzell.

"We must get as many of them as we can. I know that all the British mine-sweepers are constantly on the job, but if necessary we must have more mine-sweepers. We must keep the paths of navigation better cleared than proved to be the case to-night."

"Oh, say!" expostulated Dalzell, his eyes wide open, "we simply cannot, even with twice as many mine-sweepers, find every blooming mine that the Huns choose to sow in the Channel and North Sea."

"To find and take up every mine should be our standard," Dave insisted, "and we must live as close to that standard as we possibly can."

"Then we did wrong to go after the destroyers this night?" Dan demanded, curtly.

"Of course not, for that bombardment of that defenseless little town, carried on longer, might have cost as many lives as are likely to be lost in

the case of a steamship hitting a floating mine."

"We can't do everything at the same time," Dan contended.

"Then we must strive to do ninety-nine per cent. of everything," Darrin urged, his jaws set. "Danny-boy, I feel as badly as you do when a single innocent life is lost in the area that we are held responsible for."

"How soon do you put for sea?" Dalzell asked.

"As soon as our boats return and are hoisted on board."

Darrin was as good as his word. Twenty-one minutes later, while dawn was still invisible, the two Yankee destroyers turned seaward again. There was more work, and sterner, for them to do, and it lurked just beyond!

CHAPTER V

EYES THAT LOOKED DOWN FROM THE AIR

DAWN found the two destroyers cruising slowly northward, a little more than a mile apart.

Within sight of the bridges of the two craft were eight small, snub-nosed mine-sweepers. Frequently changing their course, these little craft were doing their utmost to pick up any mine that may have been planted just far enough under water to be struck below the water line by passing vessels.

"I suppose we're of the few who have ever seen the flash of an exploding floating mine," Dave remarked to Lieutenant Fernald. "The sea was so rough and choppy, last night, that the mine, at the instant of impact, happened to be in the trough of the sea and partly above water."

"Yes," nodded Fernald. "Had the waves been longer, the mine would have sunk to its usual depth. Had it not cost lives and a good ship, it would have been a sight worth seeing. As it was, since the lives and the ship had to be lost, I am glad that I was there to see it."

It was broad daylight now. Red streaks off in the east indicated that the sun would soon appear. But from the southwest something of at least equal interest appeared in the sky.

At the lookout's call Fernald turned to study the object in the sky through his glass.

"It's an airship, a dirigible," announced the executive officer.

"If an English dirigible, then it's all right," Dave nodded. "But, if it happens to be a German Zeppelin returning from a raid over England, then it will become our solemn duty to get the anti-aircraft gun in position and pray for a chance to take a fair shot."

"It's a craft of the smaller English dirigible pattern," Fernald announced, still studying the distant speck in the sky, which, of course, looked much larger in the field of his glass. "Yes, it's an unmistakable 'blimp'."

This latter is the slang name given to the British dirigibles.

"Better have the air-craft gun men at their station," advised Dave, and this was done.

Ten minutes later, however, the "blimp" was so close at hand that there could be no mistaking its identity. It belonged, beyond a question, to one of the squadrons of the Royal Naval Air Service.

"Radio message from the 'blimp,' sir," called a

messenger, darting from the doorway of the wireless room. "Do you wish a written copy, sir?"

Lieutenant Fernald glanced at Dave, who shook his head.

"Let's have the message orally," Fernald called down to the deck.

"'Blimp' wants to know, sir, if these two craft are the 'Grigsby' and 'Reed.'"

"Tell the operator to admit the fact," Fernald ordered.

"Officer in charge of the 'blimp,' sir, says that he was to report and help you yesterday, but that the weather was too foggy."

"Tell the operator to send back: 'Good morning. Glad to have you with us. Signature, Darrin,'" Dave directed.

The seamen and petty officer at the anti-aircraft gun left their station. Straight onward came the "blimp," dropping much lower just as it passed over. From the car beneath the big gas-bag several men leaned over to wave friendly hands, a greeting that was instantly responded to by Dave's and Dan's jackies, for the dirigible, after sailing over the "Grigsby," turned and floated over the "Reed."

"Message from the 'blimp,' sir," again iterated the messenger on the deck. "Message says: 'We're to keep near you and try to spot submarines for you.'"

"More power to your vision," was the message sent back by Dave.

"You're working northward, toward the shoals?" asked "Blimp."

"Yes," Darrin acknowledged.

"That's a likely place to find one or two of the Hun pirates resting," "Blimp" continued.

"Always a good hunting ground," Dave assented, in a radio message.

This took place while the dirigible was flying back and forth, ahead and astern, between the destroyers and to either side of their course.

"It's a fine thing to be able to move at aircraft speed," said Lieutenant Fernald, rather enviously. "If we could only make such speed, sir!"

"If we could build ships that would steam sixty to a hundred miles an hour, then the enemy could build them also," Dave returned. "There would be little, if any, net gain for us. But if we could find the secret of doubling the speed of aircraft, and keep said secret from the boches, that would be an achievement that would soon end the war."

For ten miles the sweepers proceeded, with a total "catch" of only three mines, which must have been left-overs from other cruises. By this time the little fleet was approaching the nearest of the shoals, some three miles from shore.

"Blimp" was now well ahead, presently signalling back.

"Found a sea-hornet for you, resting in the mud."

"Good enough! We'll draw his sting," the "Grigsby's" radio reply promised.

Darrin caused a signal to be made to two of the mine-sweepers to come in close to him. The "Reed" still continued on her way further out.

Aircraft are of the greatest help in discovering submerged submarines. Depending on the altitude at which they fly, air observers are able to see, in reasonably smooth water, submarines that are moving at from eighty to a hundred feet beneath the surface. A submarine that is "resting" with her nose in the mud close to shore has more to fear from aircraft than from all other possible foes.

The aircraft men, though they can drop bombs upon such lurking craft, cannot do so with anything like the accuracy that is possible to the crews of vessels on the surface. Hence when aircraft and destroyers hunt together it is almost always left to the surface craft to give the "grace blow" to the resting submarine, as also to a submarine in motion beneath the waves.

As the "blimp" moved over the shoal in question a smoke bomb left the car and hovered almost motionless in the air, though briefly. This indicated that the submarine lay on the bottom directly underneath the smoke bomb.

"And the commander of that Hun craft knows that we are approaching," Darrin commented, as the "Grigsby" raced roaringly forward. "He can hear the noise of our propellers. If his engines are ready, he'll likely back off into deeper water."

Thrice more the "blimp" passed over the submarine that was invisible to surface eyes, and each time let loose a smoke bomb.

"Now, you're directly in line," came the radio message from above. "Move dead ahead. Will tell you when you are passing over. We'll signal the word 'drop'."

The meaning of "drop" would be clear enough. It would mean that the "Grigsby" was instantly to release, over the stern, a depth bomb.

As the "Grigsby" neared the spot speed was considerably reduced. Overhead hovered the "blimp," ready for instant signalling of one word. The command had already been passed to the men stationed by the depth bomb to let go as soon as the messenger gave the word from the operator.

As Darrin glanced upward he saw the "blimp" nearly overhead.

Suddenly the messenger's startled voice roared out the message passed by the radio operator:

"Full speed astern!"

In the same instant Lieutenant Fernald repeated the order over the engine-room telegraph.

There was a jolting jar as the "Grigsby" shivered, then glided back in her own wake.

"Jove! That was a narrow squeak!" came down from the sky. "That hornet laid an egg in your path. It came within an ace of bumping your keel."

"Never did speed pay a prompter profit, then," uttered Darrin, his cheeks paling slightly.

For the Englishman's laconic message meant that the submarine had just proved herself to be of the mine-laying variety. Further, the Hun craft, hearing the destroyer's propellers almost overhead, had judged the moment at which to let loose a mine, which, rising to its proper level under water, would have struck the hull of the advancing destroyer.

Had that happened, the career of the "Grigsby" would have been over, and several officers' and seamen's names would have been added to the war's list of dead.

"Going to try again, sir?" asked Lieutenant Fernald, quietly, as Dave himself changed the full-speed-astern order.

"It's out of our line, I guess," Darrin confessed, with a smile. "Signal yonder mine-sweeper to close in on the job."

As a result of the message, and aided by the "blimp" overhead, the snub-nosed mine-sweeper steamed into position. First, her wire sweeper

picked up the mine that had been sprung for the "Grigsby's" undoing, and backed away.

Then, under Dave's further order, after the mine had been hoisted on board, the snub-nosed craft moved in with a different type of sweeper. To different wires of this implement were attached small but powerful contact bombs. Jauntily the snub-nosed craft moved over the lurking place of the submarine, and passed on ahead.

From the depths came muffled sounds, followed by a big and growing spread of oil on the water.

"Enemy done for!" signalled the "blimp."

"Thank you, sir. We know it," the "Grigsby" wirelessed back.

The mine-sweeper, having passed on ahead, now circled back, her crew grinning at sight of the mass of floating oil.

The contact bombs dangling from the sweep wires had struck against the submarine's hull and exploded, letting in the water at several points. The Hun seamen were even now drowning, caught without a show for their lives, just as they had probably sent many souls to graves in the ocean.

For some minutes more the dirigible moved back and forth through the air, her observers watching for the presence of hidden enemy craft. Then, without warning, came the message:

"Sorry, but engine trouble threatens and will

compel our return to land, and to our base if possible."

"The best of luck to you," Dave ordered wirelessed back to these British comrades. "We'll stand by until we're as close to shore as we can go."

For he knew that, near shore, the shoals became dangerous shallows at this point on the coast.

Away limped the "blimp," the "Grigsby" following, and standing ready to do rescue work should the dirigible need assistance.

But the "blimp" not only made her way over to shore, but vanished slowly in the distance.

All of the mine-sweepers that had come up were ordered by signal to continue sweeping over the shoals.

"I want to see more of this work personally," Dave told his executive officer, who was now to be left in command. "Clear away one of the power launches. I'll take Mr. Ormsby with me."

So Dave was taken over to one of the mine-sweeping, snub-nosed craft that had formerly been a steam trawler on the Dogger Banks. The commanding officer, Hartley, proved most glad to welcome them.

"We'll make you as comfortable as we can," promised Hartley.

"Now, please don't do anything of the sort,"

Darry protested. "Let us be mere spectators, or pupils, and have no fuss made over us. Instruct your men, if you'll be good enough, to omit salutes and to chat with us, if they have a chance, like comrades or pals. We want to see your real working ways, not a demonstration."

"All right, then," sighed Mr. Hartley, and passed the orders.

"When do you men sleep?" Dave inquired of a sailor who paused to light a pipe as he stood well up in the bow.

"When the blooming ship is hin dry-dock, sir," answered the British tar.

"Don't you have regular watches?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long are the watches?"

"Usually twenty-four hours in each day, sir."

Darry laughed, for he knew no living man could stand working twenty-four hours a day for any length of time.

"You were a trawler before you came into this branch of the service?" Ormsby asked.

"No, sir. Hi was a chimney sweep; that's wot made me good for this bally old business, sir."

"You like this work?" Ormsby next asked.

"Yes, sir, hit's the next best thing to being killed, sir," was the solemn response.

"Have you seen any mine-sweepers destroyed while at work?"

Instantly the sailor dropped his bantering tone, his face becoming solemn in his expression.

"You may well say that, sir," he answered. "More mine-sweepers are lost than any other kind of naval craft."

"Why is that?"

"Principally, sir, because we 'ave only a trawler's speed, and everything else that floats, including the National Debt, can overtake us."

"Is there any scarcity of men for this sort of work?" Ormsby queried.

"No, sir, it's the 'eight hof a British sailorman's ambition, sir, to die early and be buried, sir, in water a mile deep. We fairly long for hit, sir."

"Hedgeby!" came, indignantly, from Mr. Hartley, who had approached unnoticed. "What do you mean by chaffing these American officers so outrageously."

"Must 'ave mistook my horders, sir," returned Hedgeby, saluting his commander. "Some blooming bloke told as 'ow these gentlemen wanted to be treated like pals."

"The fault is mine, I guess," admitted Mr. Hartley, turning to Darrin and Ormsby. "These men are always chaffing each other, and they thought you wanted some of the same thing."

"We don't object," Dave smiled. "If hot air is the motive power that drives these men, then we want to sample it."

Hedgeby regarded this last speaker with a puzzled expression.

"If you're talking about fuel, sir," he went on, as Mr. Hartley moved away, "Hi'll say that 'ot air engines wouldn't be no good wotever on these 'ere craft. Gasoline is what we use, mostly, for our engines, sir, though some of the biggest use petroleum."

"Hot air is furnished by the men themselves," Dave explained. "It's a favorite fuel at sea."

"Maybe, sir, maybe," admitted Hedgeby, slowly, looking as solemn as an owl. "Of course you know, sir, wot's used on the Yankee boats, anyway, sir, and if your Admiralty recommends 'ot air then no doubt hit's because you Yankees know 'ow to use it better than other fuel."

"And the joke of it is," muttered Ormsby, as Hedgeby sprang to obey an order, "one can't tell whether a chap like that is laughing at us, or trying to sympathize with our ignorance."

Dave laughed, then soon forgot the chaffing, for he was greatly interested in what he saw of the work that was being carried on. Certainly, for such a comparatively slow craft, a large area of sea surface could be covered in a forenoon.

Presently Hedgeby came back to them, and Ormsby tried once more to extract some real information.

"With the amount of speed you can command,"

he resumed, "what does a craft like this do, Hedgeby, if a German destroyer comes racing along after you?"

"We just shut off speed, sir, and the blooming destroyer goes by so fast that nine times hout of ten she doesn't see us at all."

"But if the destroyer sees you and stops to engage, what then?"

Once more the quizzical expression faded from the British sailorman's eyes. He stepped back, resting one hand on a light gun mounted on a swivel pedestal.

"We do hour best with this piece, sir."

"An unequal combat, Hedgeby!"

"You may well say it, sir, but hat least we come hout of the fracas as well as does the submarine that our sweep locates on the bottom."

"Have you known of any case in which a minesweeper had any show at all against a German destroyer?"

"Yes, sir; this very craft was the boat, sir. The destroyer 'eld 'er fire and come hup close, sir, to 'ave fun teasing us. Only one shot we fired, sir, from our after gun, at the houtset, sir, but that one shot carried away the destroyer's rudder just below the water line. It was hall a piece of luck, sir."

"And then?" pressed Ormsby, for at last Hedgeby seemed to be imparting real information.

"Well, of course, sir, the 'Uns started hin at once to rig a jury rudder with timbers and canvas."

"Yes?"

"Naturally, sir, we didn't give 'em any time or chance we could 'elp, sir. We sailed round and round 'er, taking position so that we could play both guns on 'er at the same time. She couldn't steer, sir, to back 'er aim, that 'ere 'Un, so we banged away at 'er stacks and her water line until she was worse than 'elpless."

"Did you sink her?"

"No, sir. She was captured."

"By whom?"

"By two of 'is majesty's destroyers, sir, that came up. And maybe you think Hi'm joking, sir, w'en Hi tell you that the destroyers were credited with the capture because they made the 'Un strike 'is colors and take a prize crew."

Subsequently Dave and Ormsby learned from Mr. Hartley that this account was a true one.

"But we got a bit of credit in the public press," Hartley added, modestly.

Right after that it was reported that one of the wire sweeps had located a bomb. Instantly several men were rushed to aid in landing the prize. Dave and Ormsby hurried to join the group and watch a mine being taken aboard.

On account of its weight the deadly thing was

handled by tackle. Carefully the men proceeded to hoist the mine aboard.

"You'll note the little horns standing out from the top of the mine," explained Mr. Hartley, pointing to the circular mine. "These horns are usually called studs. Hit one of these studs even a light blow with a tack hammer, gentlemen, and the mine would explode. A mine like this is more deadly than the biggest shell carried by a super-dreadnaught. Let this mine explode, for instance, under our hull forward, and it would tear us to pieces in a way that would leave us afloat for hardly sixty seconds. Moreover, it would kill any man standing at or near the rail over the point of contact."

He had no more than finished speaking, while the mine was being hoisted aboard, than a terrified gasp escaped the workers.

For the mine slipped from its tackle, and slipped back toward the water, striking the side hull in its downward course!

Dave Darrin did not move. He knew there would not be time to escape!

CHAPTER VI

IN THE TEETH OF THE CHANNEL GALE

SPLASH!

The mine sank below the surface.

A quick turn by the helmsman at the wheel, and the course changed violently on the instant.

"No stud struck or scraped the side as the mine went down!" exclaimed Mr. Hartley, in a voice as cool as though he were discussing the weather. "That was what saved us."

"That, and the presence of mind displayed by your man at the wheel," Dave calmly supplemented. "That quick turn of the wheel saved your hull under the water line from striking against the infernal thing."

"I thought we were goners!" exclaimed Ormsby.

"So did I," Dave nodded, "until I saw the thing sink and then realized how prompt the helmsman had been to act without orders."

"The helmsman's act was almost routine," Hartley continued. "On a craft like this every man instinctively knows what should be done in any moment of escapable peril."

Dave now withdrew the elbow which, up to now, he had leaned against the rail. He knew that he had been within a hair's breadth of instant death, but there was nothing in his bearing to betray the fact.

Hartley quickly gave the order to put about.

"Another try for that slippery customer, eh?" queried Ormsby.

"I'd feel like a murderer, if I knowingly left that thing in the sea, to destroy some fine craft," declared Mr. Hartley, gravely. "Once we've located a mine we never leave it. We'll make the 'catch' again, but we'll inspect our tackle before we try to take it aboard. I think you gentlemen had better step back well out of the way."

"Of course we will, sir, if we are really in the way," Darrin smiled.

"You're not in our way," Hartley promptly denied. "But you will hardly care, should the tackle still be defective, to be loitering at the point of danger."

"I want to see you repair the tackle," Dave replied. "Then I want to see you make the grapple again and bring the mine safely on board."

"All right, gentlemen, if you love danger well enough to take the risk twice when you're only spectators," Hartley answered, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Again the mine was caught, grappled, and this time successfully hoisted on board.

All of this Darrin and his junior officer noted carefully, even giving a hand at the work.

Through the day at least one of the mine-sweepers continued over this line of shoal, trying constantly with the sweeps. Farther out to sea Dalzell and the "Reed" accompanied others of the craft. By nightfall it was reported that more than sixty mines had been picked up.

"The mine-layers must be actively at work in these waters," said Dave. "Undoubtedly they plant the mines at night, then toward daylight move in toward the shoal and hide there during the day. We'll try that shoal again after daylight to-morrow morning — weather permitting."

This last Darrin said because there were now lurking indications of a coming storm. Dave returned to his own craft in time.

By nine o'clock that night, or an hour after the new watch had gone on, the wind was howling through the rigging in a way that made conversation difficult on the bridge.

"Mr. Fernald, at the rate the weather is thickening I shall be on the bridge all night. I shall be glad, therefore, if after your last rounds of the ship, and after you have turned in your report, you will seek your berth and get all the sleep you can until you're called."

"Very good, sir," agreed the executive officer. He would have liked to stand watch in Darrin's place, but he knew that, with a gale coming, Darrin would not consent.

By this time the destroyer was rolling at such an angle that the order was passed for the life-lines. Soon after that a second order was issued that all men on outside duty must don life-belts. Even up on the bridge, with an abundance of hand-holds, Dave and Ensign Andrews wore the belts.

With a nearly head wind from the northeast the "Grigsby" labored in the running seas, spray dashing over the bridge and against the rubber coats and sou'westers of the two officers. Below, on the deck, the water was sometimes several inches deep, gorging the scuppers in its flow overboard. Officers and men alike wore rubber boots.

"All secure, sir," reported Lieutenant Fernald, returning after his last rounds. "A nasty time you'll have of it, sir, to-night."

"Like some other times that I've known since I took to the sea," Dave shouted back through the gale.

Wild, indeed, was the night, yet the stars remained visible. The wind had increased still more by eight bells (midnight), when the watch again changed.

"Is the weather bad enough for you to have to

remain here, sir?" asked Ensign Ormsby, respectfully.

"Yes," Darrin nodded. "I am charged with the safety of this craft."

Having gone the limit of her northerly patrol, the "Grigsby" had now headed about, dipping and lunging ahead of the wind and rolling as though the narrow craft would like nothing better than to turn turtle.

Owing to the fact that neither craft carried lights in these dangerous waters Dalzell had pulled far off. At this moment Danny Grin and the "Reed" were four miles nearer the mainland of Europe than the "Grigsby" was.

After an especially heady plunge, followed by some wild rolling from side to side, Dave shouted in his watch officer's ear:

"Ormsby, I'm going to make the round of the deck, to make sure that the life lines are all up and secure."

The ensign nodded. He would have preferred to go himself, but his place as watch officer was on the bridge.

As Dave went down the steps from the bridge a seaman on watch sprang to seize his arm and steady him.

"I've my sea-legs on," Darrin smiled at the sailor.

Then, holding the brim of his sou'-wester down

before his face, the other hand on a life-line, Darrin cautiously made his way aft. The lines along the starboard side were secure.

At the stern stood two men, gripping the sturdy lines with both hands. Here the decks were flooded with seas coming over constantly.

Dave stood with the men for a few minutes, observing the combers that rolled against the stern, the tops breaking over the side.

"I'll have the stern watch changed every hour," he shouted at the seamen above the gale. "It's too wet to stand a full trick here. Remember, on coming off, or just before going on, to go to the galley and get your coffee."

"Thank you, sir," replied one of the men, touching the brim of his headgear.

Dave released the sternmost life-line to take a quick, oblique step toward the port lines. At that very instant a huge comber climbed aboard over the stern, the great bulk of water lifting Dave as though he were but a chip.

As he struggled for his footing he had a brief glimpse of one of the sailors battling toward him. Then a continuation of the wave carried him obliquely forward, lifting him clear of the port rail at the quarter and driving him over into the sea.

Instantly a hoarse yell rose and was repeated: "Commanding officer overboard astern, sir!"

CHAPTER VII

IN THE HOUR OF DESPAIR

DAVE did not hear the wild, hoarse alarm. A mass of water pounded in his ears. He felt himself going down as though headed for the bottom of the sea.

During what seemed an interminable interval Darrin kept his mouth tightly shut. He did not struggle to rise to the surface, for he knew that as soon as the driving force of the water over him had expended itself his belt would carry him up to air.

And so it did. As Darrin shook the spray from his eyes he made out the "Grigsby" only as a dark mass far ahead. Then a wave blotted her out. When next he looked he saw nothing. The third time he made out a still more indistinct mass, which, he judged, was turning to come back and look for him.

"Steady, boy!" he urged himself. "The outfit aboard that craft will make every possible effort to find me. Ah, I knew it!"

For now the ray of the searchlight streamed out, trying to pierce the murkiness of the night.

"Commanding officer overboard!"

By the shifting of the ray, too, he saw that the "Grigsby" was putting about.

"They'll pick me up soon with that light," he told himself.

He did not permit himself to reflect that, if the startled officers and men on the destroyer located him it would be by the sheerest good luck. A human head rolling among waves on a black night is a difficult object to pick up with the searchlight.

Dave now struck out enough to keep his face turned toward the light. He did not attempt to swim toward the destroyer. That long, narrow craft circled about, bringing a second searchlight to bear.

Then Dave saw the blinkers at the foremast head gleam out dully. He even read the signal:

"Lieutenant Commander Darrin overboard. Not yet located."

"That's for Dalzell's benefit," Dave told himself. "Poor old Danny-boy will be wild, and will come steaming over here at full speed. But — confound it! The 'Grigsby' is circling farther south. Evidently Fernald thinks he came back too far on his wake."

Farther and farther south went the destroyer, still sweeping the sea with her two searchlights.

Then Dave beheld, after minutes, another searchlight beam crossing the others, and knew

that Dan Dalzell, aboard the "Reed," was making anxious quest for his floating chum.

Both craft, after the "Reed" had once come within a quarter of a mile, began operating further away. There was nothing on the black, roaring waters by which to locate the spot where the "Grigsby" had been when her commander was hurled overboard.

Twenty minutes passed after the "Reed" had come up. There was more talking with the blinkers between the two craft. The destroyers moved in ever widening, and then contracting, circles, but not once did either come near enough to pick up a glimpse of that one face that held occasionally above the rolling waves.

After an hour of searching there was a sorrowful conference between the officers directing the signals on the two destroyers. They decided that every possible effort had been made, and that Lieutenant Commander Darrin was surely lost.

Indeed, at about that time Dave, though he was too far away and dashed with too much spray to read the signals, had about given up hope.

Chilled to the bone by the icy waters, he had at first striven to keep himself warm by such exercise as he could apply. But now he was weakening.

Had it not been for the unusual vigor of his constitution he would have been dead by this time.

It was now only a question of a little more time when he must freeze to death.

"All right, Davy-boy," he reflected, almost drowsily. "While you were alive you managed to do a few things! But poor Belle! I hope this isn't going to upset her too much!"

Even the thought of his loved young wife did not stir him much, which showed, indeed, that Darrin was near the end of his vital resources and that he must soon give up his struggle.

After a while the instinct of desperation seized him. With a last summoning of his strength he began fighting for his life.

"I won't freeze!" he cried, between grinding teeth. "I can keep moving a good while yet. I won't allow myself to die here. That would be no better than suicide!"

For a few minutes more he continued to use arms and feet in a determined effort to warm his blood against the numbing cold.

"Ha, here comes one of the destroyers, right now," Dave laughed, hysterically, as a form loomed up in the night and came toward him.

Indeed, that dark mass, which presently resolved itself into the hull of a steamship battling with the gale, seemed bent on running him down.

Nearer and nearer it came. Dave tried to shout, but found his voice too weak to be heard above the roar of wind and wave. Though he

fought desperately to get out of the course of the oncoming hull, the rolling waters washed him back.

His efforts, however, had availed him somewhat, for, though he was so close that he could almost touch the hull as the bow passed him, Darrin felt that he could avoid being run down by the ship.

He tried to shout again, but only hoarse noises came from his throat. Then something splashed close to him as it struck the water. A wave washed Darrin against a rope. With all the force left in his hands he twined his fingers around the strands.

Then, though Dave did not see it, a face peered over the rail above. There came a tug at the rope, but Dave would not let go. He found himself being dragged slowly along with the hull of this craft that was battling a head wind.

When the man above found that he could not haul up the rope he peered down at the water, then set up a yell in some strange jargon.

An instant later a second face appeared behind the first. The bright gleam of a pocket flash-lamp cut the blackness to the water. There was a second exclamation, quickly followed by a command.

A third man joined the other two at the rail. Dave blinked upward at the pocket flash-lamp.

He saw something descending, heard a faint whish above the noise of the gale, and felt a noose drop down over his head and shoulders.

Just how he did it Darrin cannot remember, even now, but he managed to slip that noose first under one arm pit, then the other, all the time keeping a desperate hold of the trailing rope.

A pull from above, then a dull throb of hope sent the blood through Darrin's frame as he felt the noose gather tightly under his arms. Slowly, his body bumping against the rolling hull, he felt himself moving upward.

Ready hands seized and hauled him in over the rail. At that instant Dave's senses forsook him. He collapsed on the deck, a limp, huddled, drenched human form.

Nor could he judge how much later it was when he opened his eyes again. But cold? Not a bit of it! He felt as though he were in a furnace room. Stripped, he lay in a berth, two stalwart sailors rubbing him under the direction of a third person, while a fourth was slowly forcing a hot drink down his throat. It was a strangling cough, on account of some of the fluid entering his windpipe, that had brought him back to consciousness.

Opening his eyes, Dave lay quietly, enjoying the warmth after his bitter experience. He noticed that the sailors who were rubbing him were dripping with perspiration. Indeed, they had a

right to drip, for the steam in this little cabin had been turned on through two separate services.

Dave tried to speak, but all he could say was: "Ugh!"

"Good! You don't feel chilled, now?" questioned the man who held the hot drink to his lips.

"Gracious, no!" Darrin whispered, hoarsely. "I'm roasting."

The man spoke to the sailors, who stopped their rubbing and spread a few thicknesses of blanket over him.

Dave's next realization was that this unknown craft did not roll so heavily as might be expected. He reasoned that the ship must be a freighter of broad beam.

Languor was stealing over him as the questioner asked:

"How do you feel?"

"Like having a big sleep," Dave whispered drowsily. His eyes closed and he dozed even before he could think to wonder if his brother officers on the "Grigsby" and "Reed" knew that he was all right.

Putting down the cup of hot drink, the man who had done the talking dismissed the three others, seated himself on the edge of the berth and placed a finger on one of Dave's unresisting wrists.

The same man was there, seated on a locker

and smoking a pipe, when Dave Darrin again opened his eyes.

This time Dave sat up rather nimbly, then turned, supporting his head on one hand.

"Hullo, there!" Dave hailed, cheerily.

"Getting your strength back, aren't you?" queried the stranger.

"Yes, sir! But tell me. Is this the same night I was picked up and introduced on board, so to speak?"

"The same night."

"About how many hours ago?"

"Five, I guess."

"Then it must be near daylight."

"Yes."

"Any American destroyers sighted hereabouts, do you know?"

"Not at last accounts. We have been keeping a lookout, too, for your uniform proclaimed you to be a Yankee naval officer."

"What ship is this?"

"The 'Rigsdak.'"

"Norwegian?" Dave inquired.

"Danish freighter, homebound from Hartlepool."

"And you're the ship's doctor?"

"Yes. Unless we meet one of your own country's ships you'll be ashore in Denmark before noon today. But the sea is so rough that I do not

believe we could transfer you, even if we met one of your own craft."

"Denmark isn't such a bad country," Dave laughed, pleasantly. "I've been there. And you're mighty quick people. It didn't take you long to rope and haul me on board."

"Because our second officer had a man in his watch who used to be a cowboy in your country, and he can handle a lariat well. Travelling through these dangerous waters we always carry a line forward with a noose at one end. You're the third man we've roped out of the water in six months."

"But what was that first line that was thrown overboard — I mean the one I grabbed and held on to?"

"There was a bucket at the end of that rope," the ship's surgeon informed Dave. "The deck-hose is out of order, and a sailor threw the bucket over to haul up water with which to wash down the passageway."

"I'm thankful he made the cast just at that instant," Dave murmured.

"Providence must have directed the cast," replied the doctor. "And it wasn't your time to die."

"I've no right to die, if I can possibly prevent it!" Dave rejoined warmly. "I'm only a small-fry officer, to be sure, but even at that I'm needed,

like every other trained American officer, until Germany has been taught the great lesson of law and morality."

"Amen to that!" agreed the doctor, fervently.

"You're not pro-German, then, like so many of your countrymen?" Dave asked, with a smile.

"There are few of us who are pro-German in Denmark," replied the ship's surgeon. "Though, until your Entente allies can protect us against powerful Germany's wrath it is not prudent for us to be too outspoken in favor of England, France and America."

"From your accent you've been in our country?" Dave hinted.

"I took my degree in an American medical school, but I am a Dane. And now, sir, your name?"

"David Darrin, lieutenant-commander, United States Navy."

"And I am Dr. Valpak. And now, Mr. Darrin, I advise that you rest your mind, eat what I am going to order sent here, and then take another nap."

Dave gladly ate of the sea biscuit and soup that were brought to him, after which Dr. Valpak felt his pulse, administered a drink of something with an unfamiliar taste, then uttered the professional command:

"Sleep!"

Dr. Valpak closed the door from outside. Dave closed his eyes, and enjoyed the luxury of another nap.

CHAPTER VIII

DAVE MEETS THE FATE OF THE SEA

IT was almost nine o'clock in the morning when Darrin awoke. He at once realized how refreshed he was. His had been a close call, but fortunate accident and his own strong body had pulled him through.

There on the floor were his rubber boots, on the locker his underclothing, while on knobs against the cabin wall hung the garments that comprised his uniform.

Rising, Dave was delighted to find himself still strong. Without ado he drew off and tossed across the berth the coarse nightgown that some one had put on him. Then he began to dress.

Everything was dry — indeed, laundered. These new Danes of the sea knew how to be hospitable. So Darrin dressed, and, when he rang for hot water, a steward appeared with the ship's barber, who aided in Darrin's toilet. Before this had been finished Dr. Valpak thrust his head in to inquire:

"Do I intrude?"

"Only as a personage from the pages of 'Arabian Nights,' Doctor," Darrin laughed. "Come in."

Not only did the doctor come in, but soon, also, a waiter, who set up a small table made fast to the wall, and on it spread such a breakfast as made Dave's heart rejoice.

Wind and sea had abated much. The broad "Rigsdak" now rode the water with comparatively little roll. Dave sat down to enjoy his breakfast, and Dr. Valpak soon withdrew.

Just after the finish of the meal the surgeon returned, bringing with him this time the ship's master, one Kennor, who spoke with a strong accent. Dave expressed his thanks for the fine care that had been given him.

"And you muss der mate meet," declared Captain Kennor, beaming. "He it vass who show der light in your face, und den der noose was over you drop."

So presently Dave followed these new friends to the deck, where he was introduced to the mate. He also, through Dr. Valpak, thanked the sailor who had cast the bucket-line overboard. The seaman who had dropped the noose around him spoke English fluently. Dave shook hands with both sailors. He then followed Captain Kennor and the mate to the bridge.

"You carry only freight?" Dave asked.

"Somedimes passengers," replied Captain Kennor. "Two we have dis time. An English lawyer und hiss young vife."

The pair just mentioned were seen walking on the spar deck forward. The man was well past middle age, of fine, rather sharp features and with thick gray hair. The woman did not appear to be above the age of twenty-five.

Captain Kennor escorted Dave down and introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Launce.

"One doesn't often hear a story like that of your rescue," said Mr. Launce.

"It would have killed you, had you been an ordinary man," shivered Mrs. Launce.

"Thank you for the inference," Darrin laughed.

"But I have met several of your American naval officers," Mrs. Launce continued. "You are splendidly big, enduring men."

"Again I must thank you."

"A man accustomed to indoor life could not have lived half as long as you did before you were picked up," added the lawyer.

"Do you feel your full strength yet?" asked his wife.

"Not — quite, I'll admit," Dave answered.

"Then it will be well if you find a seat, inside, too, I should think," continued the Englishwoman. "Shall we all go inside? The air is cold out here."

Truth to tell, though he was not by any means in a fainting condition, Dave Darrin did feel that a seat inside, where it was warm, would be much to his liking.

So Captain Kennor led them to a small dining cabin, where the white cloths had been removed from the tables and homely red ones substituted.

"Dr. Valpak told me you expected to make port by noon," said Dave.

"Dot vass der hope, but last night's vinds held us back more dan ve knew," replied Captain Kennor. "Id vill be two dis afternoon before ve make —"

He was interrupted by a shattering jar that made the ship stagger. It was accompanied by a crashing explosion.

Uttering a cry of fright Mrs. Launce sprang to her feet.

"Can that be —" she began.

"Yes, madam, a torpedo," Dave replied, rising more slowly. "It was evidently a hard hit, but this twenty-eight-hundred-ton ship should remain afloat at least half an hour, unless another torpedo be launched. There is plenty of time. Will you permit me?"

There were life-belts at hand. Dave quickly and deftly fastened Mrs. Launce's life-belt about her, then performed a similar office for her husband. This done he went to his recent cabin,

where he donned his own belt and stepped out on the deck, joining his fellow passengers.

Struck on the port side, just forward of her boilers, the "Rigsdak" was already listing considerably to that side.

"The captain and the first officer are below," hailed Dr. Valpak. "They will examine the ship's injuries and decide. It may not be necessary to abandon ship."

Mrs. Launce turned to Darrin, who had just turned back from the port rail. She looked at him so imperatively that he nodded and replied:

"We shall have to take to the boats. This ship is not going to float. Her pumps will not save her, for the hole in the side is beyond temporary repairs."

Within two or three minutes Captain Kennor and his mate appeared, confirming Dave's verdict.

Darrin had already looked out over the sea, but he had been unable to make out any sign of the presence of a submarine.

"Could it have been a mine?" demanded Mr. Launce.

"No, sir," Dave answered, promptly. "Had we struck a mine the explosion would have been much more violent."

"Then a torpedo provides sufficient experience of this sort of thing," cried Mrs. Launce, making a face.

"Der passengers vill my boat go in!" called Captain Kennor. "Dere vill time be."

Again Mrs. Launce glanced inquiringly at Darrin, who nodded his confirmation.

Three boats were cleared away, carrying most of the crew and all the officers except the master. The boats were safely launched, and fortunately the sea was not too rough for them.

Then Captain Kennor appeared, carrying a bag and his navigating instruments.

"Are your ship's papers and instruments intended for the Germans, sir?" Dave inquired, significantly.

"No; you be right," admitted Captain Kennor, opening his eyes wide, after a brief moment's thought.

Going to the rail he tossed bag and instruments over into the sea.

Then the last boat was lowered, the seamen who remained behind jumping as soon as their work was completed, and being picked up from the water.

"Ve shall but a few hours of rowing haff," declared Captain Kennor. "It vill not so hard be upon uss."

Dave was thinking of another prospect, but did not voice his thought. The men in the captain's boat gave way at the oars, Kennor steering. The other boats had already pulled well clear of

the coming foundering, and now the captain's boat followed. The "Rigsdak" was likely to remain afloat for some minutes yet.

"I thought so," muttered Darrin, pointing to where a gray conning tower was emerging from the sea.

Captain Kennor gave an order in his native tongue, and the men in his boat ceased rowing.

"Dey vill uss hail, so ve need not be too far avay," he explained to his passengers.

After the conning tower the gray back of the sea pest rose into view. The manhole of the tower was opened and an officer appeared, followed to the deck by a few seamen, two of whom stationed themselves by a gun that popped up into view.

"Come alongside!" shouted the officer, in English, through a megaphone.

Again Captain Kennor's oarsmen gave way, their skipper heading for the submarine.

"That will do. Cease rowing," commanded the German officer. "What ship is that yonder?"

"Der Danish freighter, 'Rigsdak,'" replied Captain Kennor.

"And its master?"

"Dat iss me."

"Come aboard."

At the order Dave, who had quietly loosened his belt and holster containing his automatic re-

volver, quickly dropped them overboard on the side farthest from the German craft.

There was sufficient sea running to make the task of getting close alongside a difficult one. A German sailor reached out to catch Kennor's arm and aid him aboard the submarine.

"And your instruments and papers," ordered the German officer, sharply.

"I did not dem with me bring," replied Kennor.

"Perhaps that will be so much the worse for you," was the scowling reply. "We want the papers, and we have need, especially, of ship's instruments."

The German eyed Dave Darrin curiously. The American officer's uniform was concealed under his sou'-wester, rubber coat and boots, but after a moment's inspection, the German said curtly:

"You, too, will come aboard."

As refusal would have been absurd under the circumstances Darrin promptly obeyed. Instantly the German officer snatched a fold of Darrin's rubber coat, pulling it aside and thus revealing a glimpse of the uniform beneath.

"Take off that rubber coat!" the Hun ordered, brusquely.

Flushing slightly, Dave obeyed, his uniform now being fully revealed.

"Ha!" snarled the Hun. "I suspected something of the sort. "You two will go down through

the manhole. And this man and woman are passengers? They will come aboard."

Captain Kennor led the way below, Mr. and Mrs. Launce following. Dave, as he reached the manhole, turned to see the "Rigsdak" vanish beneath the waters.

Then Dave Darrin stepped inside the conning tower and began to descend the ladder — a German prisoner at last!

CHAPTER IX

THREATS TO A PRISONER

AS for the seamen in the boat, the officer, after a scowling stare in their direction, ordered them also on board, where he had them lined up forward.

"Take off those life-belts," he ordered, still in English, and a seaman who understood interpreted to his fellow-Danes.

Off came the life-belts, which were dropped to the deck. German sailors then kicked them all overboard.

Now the submarine began to move slowly. A shot was fired from the forward gun into the lifeboat, wrecking and sinking her. This done,

the German seamen followed their officer in through the manhole, which was closed.

For at least two miles the submarine moved along on the surface, then, slowly, began to submerge. One of the Danish sailors on deck set up a howl of fright when he found his shoes six inches under water. The cry was taken up by the other sailors with him.

The water rose to their knees — higher. The conning tower settled down into the sea, and the wretched sailors of the captain's boat were left floundering in the water, without life-belts or anything buoyant to keep them afloat.

The last vestige of the submarine vanished, leaving more than a dozen despairing men to flounder and to die, for the "Rigsdak's" other boats were now too far distant to see what had happened.

Going below, Dave and his friends from the "Rigsdak" were conducted into a tiny wardroom behind the mess table at which sat a frowning, leering German ober-lieutenant.

"A ship's master who did not like us well enough to bring his papers and his instruments," barked this commanding officer of the sea-hornet. "An Englishman and his young wife, eh? But we have here —?"

"An American naval officer," replied the younger German officer.

For some reason the ober-lieutenant's manner changed. He looked Dave over curiously, but without the same ferocity.

"Be good enough to be seated," he said, with a wave of the hand toward a chair. "Let these swine stand!"

But Dave chose to remain on his feet. Again the ober-lieutenant turned to him, though with comparative courtesy.

"I offered you a seat, sir. I trust you will avail yourself of the invitation."

"I cannot seat myself, sir," Darrin answered, stiffly, "while a lady is forced to stand."

"Then the woman will have a seat too," replied the ober-lieutenant, with a contemptuous glance in Mrs. Launce's direction. But that young Englishwoman met his look of contempt with a glance that beat the German at his own game, and remained on her feet.

"Oh, very well," said the German commander, carelessly. "Now, I will enter in my log the name and other particulars concerning the master of the 'Rigsdak.'"

Captain Kennor accordingly supplied the particulars, which were written down.

"The English cattle next!" ordered the ober-lieutenant, gruffly.

Mr. Launce therefore stated the names, ages and residence of himself and wife.

"Your reason for travelling?" rasped the German commander, looking up from his record.

"Health," replied the Englishman, stiffly.

"Whose?" — sneeringly.

"Mine."

"You do not look ill."

"That cannot be helped," replied Mr. Launce, as stiffly as ever.

"You must have passports, since you are travelling," suggested the ober-lieutenant.

"Yes; we have," admitted Mr. Launce.

"Turn them over to me."

Receiving the documents in question, the German commander looked them over carefully. Without comment, he handed them to a younger officer, who left the room with them, but soon returned.

"Take these people away," ordered the ober-lieutenant. "And see that you obey all orders without question," he added, to Kennor and the English couple.

When they had been left alone the ober-lieutenant rose to his feet, holding out his hand to Darrin though a bit stiffly.

"We are brothers in arms, it seems, though just now we are enemies," said the German.

"We are enemies, yes," Dave admitted, ignoring the outstretched hand. At this the German flushed, allowing his proffered hand to fall.

"You shall have all permissible courtesy while you are my prisoner, and I trust you will show the same," said the ober-lieutenant.

"I bespeak no courtesy, sir," Dave replied coolly, though without direct affront. "I quite understand that I am a prisoner of war, and, as I cannot help the fact, I will not resent it. You are going to confine me, I take it?"

"No," said the ober-lieutenant, again seating himself and picking up his pen. "You will be given quarters, and allowed some freedom as long as you do not forfeit it. You may even eat at table with us."

"Thank you," said Darrin, bowing stiffly.

"I have not yet entered your name. Be good enough to supply me with it."

"David Darrin."

"Rank?"

"Lieutenant commander."

"Yankee Navy?"

"United States Navy, sir."

"Present detail?"

"Commanding officer of a torpedo boat destroyer."

"Her name?" demanded the ober-lieutenant, writing.

"I decline to state."

"Name of the destroyer?" insisted the German.

"You heard my answer to that," Darrin re-

turned, his lips tightening. "I refuse to reveal the name of the destroyer."

"Her present station?"

"I decline to answer."

"Your reason for being away from your craft and being aboard the 'Rigsdak'?" queried the German, glancing up.

"I was washed overboard in a gale, and rescued by the crew of the 'Rigsdak'," Dave answered, truthfully, without going into details.

"Were you washed overboard from the craft of which you are commanding officer?" pressed the German.

"Again I must decline to answer."

"Oh, very good," said the ober-lieutenant, carelessly. "I shall find that out presently."

Then, as he scanned the information he had written down, the German asked:

"Darrin? Darrin? Where have I heard that name before?"

Picking up another book from the table, the ober-lieutenant turned rapidly through some indexed pages. Suddenly a gleam came into his eyes.

"Ah, here I have it. Darrin, David. Responsible for the capture and recognition of Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold. Witness against von Bechtold, who was executed in England as a spy. Ha! So you are the Darrin, eh?"

"I may be," half-assented Dave, feeling the other's burning gaze.

"Then I am glad to have you here, Lieutenant-Commander Darrin!" cried the German officer, "but I am afraid things will go badly indeed with you when you arrive in Germany!"

CHAPTER X

LIKE THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH

"INDEED?" asked Dave, raising his eyebrows slightly.

"You cannot expect that the people of the Fatherland will feel any great kindness toward you," pursued the ober-lieutenant.

"Why should they dislike me?"

"Because you brought about the death of von Bechtold, and he was an officer most valuable to our government."

"If you caught an American spy in Germany would you arrest him?"

"Assuredly," admitted the German officer.

"And do your best to prove your charge against him and have him executed."

"Again, assuredly."

"That was what I did, in the case of von Bechtold."

"Bah, you are like the French and English!" snapped the ober-lieutenant. "You can never get it through your heads that a German is more important than one of your kinds of people."

"No," Dave agreed, "I am afraid that we cannot appreciate that fact, or even admit it to be a fact."

"And now, before you leave me," broke in the German officer, quickly, "tell me the name of your destroyer and the station on which you last served."

Dave smiled, but did not answer in words. The ober-lieutenant regarded him frowningly.

"Oh, very good," said the German, at last. "There are those in Germany who know how and possess the means to make you talk. Your record shall be completed there. And now — !"

Going to the wardroom door the ober-lieutenant called:

"Lieutenant von Schellen!"

The same younger officer came to the door.

"Be good enough to show Lieutenant Commander Darrin to his quarters and extend to him any courtesies that you properly may. It is not fitting that a man of his rank should have to receive orders from a seaman."

"This way," directed von Schellen, briefly. He led the way down the narrow passage to a curtained doorway.

"In here you will find your home until we reach Germany," said von Schellen. "If you wish exercise you may leave your sleeping cabin and walk back and forth in this passage-way. If the ober-lieutenant should decide to be gracious enough to invite you to the wardroom, then you will also have the freedom of that room — at meal hours only. You will not go to any other part of this craft."

With a curt nod the young lieutenant left Dave. Perhaps von Schellen had done his best to be courteous.

Pulling back the curtain Dave looked in. It was a stuffy little place, just long enough to hold two berths, one above the other, against the outer shell of the submarine. In the upper berth Captain Kennor lay at full length, a hand over his eyes.

"We are cabin-mates, then?" Dave asked, gently.

"Yes, so I been told," the Dane answered gloomily.

"And you in the upper berth? Why did you not take the lower one? It is more comfortable."

"I vould no so presume!" protested the Dane. "Not wid a man of your rank."

"I haven't rank enough in our naval service to feel conceited about it," Darry smiled, "and you are considerably older than I. Any difference

there may be in comfort is your due. Will you kindly exchange?"

Not without some difficulty did Dave succeed in inducing Captain Kennor to change to the lower, broader berth of the two. Dave, after removing his boots and some of his clothing, climbed to the upper berth, spreading a blanket over himself and lying down, for he felt that rest was absolutely needed.

At the noon-meal hour the ober-lieutenant sent an orderly to invite Darrin to the table, though the same invitation was not to be extended to Captain Kennor, who would be expected to eat with the German petty officers. But, as Dave and Captain Kennor were asleep at the time, the orderly departed without waking them.

It was past the middle of the afternoon when Dave Darrin at last awoke sufficiently to decide upon rising. Getting to the floor, and noting that Captain Kennor was still asleep, Dave dressed almost by stealth.

While he was still so engaged there came a slight knock at the door. A German petty officer looked in.

"The ober-lieutenant sends his compliments," announced the fellow, in English. "He will be pleased to have you join him. I will lead the way."

Dave followed, down the passage and out into the main cabin. There, at a table under the conning tower, sat the ober-lieutenant and the same younger officer.

"We will raise the periscope and show you what we are about to do," said the ober-lieutenant, with a half-malicious smile.

Von Schellen, his hand on the wheel of the periscope mechanism, awaited a nod from his chief. Receiving it, the younger officer turned the wheel, sending the periscope up a foot above water.

On the white surface of the shaded table beneath Dave saw the image of a vessel.

"The fellow yonder has not yet sighted us," said the ober-lieutenant, grimly. "We are about to send him a torpedo. Yonder craft is to be our game — Yankee steel and Yankee meat!"

As for Dave, as he stared in horror at the image on the table he recognized in the ship mirrored there Dan Dalzell's own command, the "Reed."

Forcing himself to speak calmly, and to act a part Dave begged:

"One moment longer, please! Let me see whether I can recognize the doomed craft."

"Doomed, indeed," chuckled the ober-lieutenant. "We are in position and I am about to fire. Be ready to drop the 'scope, von Schellen!"

But Dave Darrin, knocking von Schellen's

hand away, seized the lever, forcing the periscope to rise to its full height above the conning tower. Nor did he stop there. With the mightiest twist and wrench of which he was capable he jammed the lever so that it could not be promptly operated to lower the periscope.

"Stop!" thundered von Schellen, leaping to his feet, his face purple with rage.

"I've stopped," assented Darry, smilingly, as he stepped back. "Do you realize what you have done, scoundrelly Yankee?" hissed the ober-lieutenant, also rising and drawing his revolver.

"Of course I do," Dave smilingly assented.

"You have jammed the periscope. But at least we can dive when we need, for — there!"

With deft manipulation of a small device the German commander added:

"I have closed the valves of the 'scope, which will now admit no water if we dive. You did not succeed, Herr Darrin. But you will draw upon us the Yankee fire if yonder commander is now able to sight our scope."

As if to verify the statement a muffled sound came to them through the water. Glancing down swiftly at the table von Schellen saw that reflected which caused him to exclaim:

"The Yankee destroyer has opened upon us with her forward port gun. And there goes the starboard gun!"

Von Schellen, at a nod from his chief, signalled the orders for diving. The ober-lieutenant saw the "Reed," as pictured on the white table, come steaming toward the submarine at full speed.

"You idiot!" raged the German commander. "Your treachery has betrayed us, and now the Yankee will do his best to sink us and drown all on board here."

"That's what I'm praying right now he'll do!" cried Dave Darrin, his face radiant with the glory of the thought.

CHAPTER XI

A VICTIM OF COURTESY

"AND what about the woman we have on board?" demanded the ober-lieutenant, hurriedly. "Would you destroy her, too — cause her, if you could, to die the death of drowning helplessly?"

"I — I had forgotten her," Dave confessed.

But from the passageway came a prompt response.

"Never mind me," called Mrs. Launce. "I have heard, and I, also, pray to see this pirate craft destroyed before it can accomplish any more

wickedness and destruction. My own death does not matter!"

"Silence, woman!" cried the ober-lieutenant, glaring at Mrs. Launce.

"Mrs. Launce has spoken, and has no more to say," broke in the unruffled voice of Caleb Launce.

"Is that the way you address women when they are helpless?" Dave demanded, tauntingly.

"When they take part in conversations without being asked," the German answered, curtly.

"I have heard it was a way with the naval men of your country," Dave drove back, tauntingly.

Von Schellen reported:

"We are now sixty feet below the surface, and headed west by southwest. Any further orders?"

"None," replied the commander. "Keep to the course until I direct it to be changed."

With a stiff salute von Schellen turned and vanished.

"Your Yankee friend shall not catch us this time," jeered the ober-lieutenant. "Listen! Can you hear his propellers? We are going directly away from him."

"He will catch you, in the end," Darrin retorted, "or some other comrade will. I know how many of your craft our Navy has put out of commission, and I know how many our Allies have destroyed."

"But you do not know how many submarines we have left, nor how fast we are building them," mocked the German commander.

"Do not be too sure of that," Dave retorted. "It may be that our information is more exact than you suspect."

"Have you anything definite to say on that subject?" demanded the ober-lieutenant, regarding his prisoner attentively.

"Naturally not."

"Then, as I shall be busy, will you be good enough to return to the bounds set for you?"

Dave bowed, turned and re-entered the passage-way. The German naval officer's manner toward him had not been insulting. There was an evident effort to treat Darrin with the outward show of respect that should be accorded to a prisoner of his rank. Yet Dave knew that his enemy hated him.

Mr. and Mrs. Launce were in the passage-way, and Captain Kennor could be heard stirring in his cabin.

"Mr. Darrin, we are now at good depth under water?" inquired Mr. Launce.

"Yes, sir; I believe so. We are not to be caught and destroyed just yet."

"That I am sorry to hear," replied the lawyer, gravely.

"And, I, too, am sorry," spoke up Mrs. Launce.

"Life has been sweet to me, but I would much rather be dead than a captive in Germany. I condole with you, Mr. Darrin, that it was not possible for you to bring about the destruction of this wretched craft."

"It will, before long, go the way of the other German submarines," Dave assured her, hoping that there were enemy eavesdroppers who would overhear and understand.

At best exercise in this narrow short passage was a farce, though it was often more agreeable to be out here than sitting in the cramped space of one of the tiny sleeping cabins. The four prisoners rested, or moved listlessly about, until the evening meal was ready. Then Captain Kennor was summoned to eat with the petty officers, while Dave and his English companions received word to join the craft's officers in the tiny ward-room.

Mr. Launce glanced at Dave with a questioning look.

"Really, Mr. Darrin, I would as soon starve as eat with those German officer fellows, and my wife feels as I do about it."

"And my idea is the same," Dave answered.

So Mr. Launce turned to the German mess servant, delivering in German a message to the effect that the three prisoners did not care to join the officers at mess.

Thereupon von Schellen came out.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"We don't care to eat with you, sir," Mr. Launce replied, bluntly.

"Oh, very well," replied the junior officer, carelessly. "You three, then, may eat at second table after we are pleased to be through."

Clicking his heels and wheeling, the junior officer went back to the wardroom. The three prisoners waited more than an hour before the same mess attendant came and beckoned them to enter.

They were alone, now, save for the presence of the ober-lieutenant, who was seated at one end of the table writing. He did not look up as they entered and seated themselves.

The meal set out was a coarse one, in quality of food, but there was plenty of it. The three prisoners ate slowly, almost in silence, nor did they address their host.

Before the meal was over the German commander left the room without word or sign to his guests.

"Why, the boat has stopped!" exclaimed Mrs. Launce, in a low voice, some three minutes later. "Are we resting on the bottom?"

"I think I shall soon be able to answer you," Darrin replied.

Soon machinery began to rumble.

"We are on the surface," said Dave, laying down knife and fork. "We are recharging batteries."

Mrs. Launce leaned forward to whisper:

"Then surely there is some chance that one of our own craft will hear the racket. We may be fired upon and sunk, do you not think?"

"You are eager for death?" Dave asked, studying her face.

"Yes. I prefer death to being taken to Germany."

"And I, too," Dave nodded.

"Have they anything against you there?" Mrs. Launce whispered, after glancing about her.

"Only, I believe, that I brought about the capture and execution of one of their most valuable spies."

"That would be enough," whispered Mr. Launce. "For that the Germans would not openly try and execute you, but they will find other ways to bring about your death."

Instantly it occurred to Darrin that, evidently, some one in official Germany knew of something to bring against Mrs. Launce, for her question to Darrin had indicated as much.

As they sat there at the table the young American officer noted that the submarine rolled hardly at all. It was plain that the recent gale had subsided, for the slight rocking of the boat indi-

cated only a gentle swell on the surface of the sea.

In the doorway appeared Lieutenant von Schellen. In his right hand, steadied by his left, was what looked like an album. Glancing up from a page the junior officer remarked, with quick speech and decided emphasis:

"You are the Countess of Denby."

By a great effort the Englishwoman turned slowly, glancing at the German.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "You have another woman prisoner? You are bringing her here. I am sorry that she is in your hands."

"*You* are the Countess of Denby!" von Schellen charged again, once more levelling his accusing finger at her. "And you, sir," shifting the direction of his finger to point at the supposed Mr. Launce, "are the Earl of Denby!"

"I have risen in the world since I went to sea!" jested the Englishman.

"We know who you are, now," von Schellen continued, with brutal bluntness, "and we know as much more about you as we need. We know of the Admiralty office that you visited, and we know the information that you two were expected to gather along the Kiel Canal when you should have entered Germany! Oh, you will soon understand that we have most excellent information from England! You journeyed to Denmark on a poor old tramp steamer, under assumed

names and with fraudulent passports furnished by your government. From Denmark you were to work your way to Holland, and thence into Germany, which country you would enter with still other passports furnished you in Holland. We know all about the noble pair of Denby! Of course you will deny this, but save your denials for use before a German court!"

Having said which von Schellen turned and left them. The Englishman and woman gave each other a swift, horrified glance, then lowered their eyes. As they looked up again Dave sent them a swift glance of sympathy, but there was a look of defiant pride on the Englishwoman's face.

The same thought was in the minds of all three. Von Schellen or some other German had been eavesdropping near enough to hear the whispered conversation that had taken place.

That was a fair ruse for use in war-time. Darrin, as he looked at the English pair, felt sure that they really were the Earl and Countess of Denby.

From the cabin under the conning tower came a chorus of hoarse laughter. The Englishwoman's swift look said plainly:

"They are laughing over the discovery that they have made."

After that, gloom fell upon the trio. Darrin

had never heard, before, of the Earl of Denby. Later he learned that the Earl had led a recluse's life among books until the war began. About that time he had married a young noblewoman, and the pair had gone promptly into effective war work, though not in ways that caused their portraits to be published in the illustrated weeklies.

Von Schellen re-appeared five minutes later, casting first a look of triumph at the English couple, next turning to Dave.

"The American officer may take the air briefly on deck if he so desires," said the German. "It is by gracious permission of the commanding officer."

Darrin's first impulse was to decline, unless his companions were included. He changed his mind, however, for he had an intense desire to find out, if possible, in what waters the craft now was. So he rose, bowing to his table companions, and followed von Schellen to the conning tower ladder. Here he passed Herr Ober-Lieutenant and bowed stiffly.

"I am trusting you on deck," said the latter, with a frown. "It is a courtesy. Do not abuse it by any untoward conduct."

Then Dave followed his conductor up into the tower, von Schellen all the while keeping sharp lookout to see that Darrin did not attempt to do

any damage to the levers on the indicator board.

Von Schellen, preceding him to the deck, turned to say, as Darrin reached the platform:

"Observe. Your desperate trick did not harm us for long. You will note that the periscope is again lowered. In fact, a new one has been put in its place. We have tested the new periscope and its bearings, and have found that they work perfectly. Your treachery, with which you repaid the commanding officer's courtesy, did not avail you much."

Darrin did not reply. Instead, he turned to survey the night on all sides. Overhead were heavy clouds, obscuring the light of the moon, which, in its present phase, would have furnished considerable light over the waters. There was a fine mist in the air, but the sixth sense of the sailor warned Dave not to expect rain tonight.

Despite the cloudiness, however, one could see for a considerable distance over the slightly rolling sea. There was no other craft in sight.

"You do not see much hope," mocked von Schellen. "We have chosen a quiet part of the sea, as you will notice."

"You usually try to do that, don't you?" Dave asked, in a tone of ordinary curiosity.

"You must know," laughed the junior officer. "You have spent months pursuing our submarines."

"And have had some success in catching them," Dave answered.

Von Schellen's laugh was bitter as he rejoined:

"Ah! You are a good boaster! But do not go too far, Herr Darrin! Do not make me wish to strike you!"

"I wouldn't care how soon you struck me," Darrin smiled, "provided I could be assured of a fair field and no favor in defending myself. But I think we are going too far in our talk, are we not, when one considers the consideration that a captor must show to a prisoner of war. As a gentleman you cannot strike me; nor, as a gentleman, can I seek to provoke you to do so. The situation is one calling for tact, Herr Lieutenant."

"And I cannot forget that you are taking occasion to remind me of the fact," retorted von Schellen, a dark look coming into his face.

"Then may I, as the prisoner of war, ask that the subject be changed?" Dave Darrin suggested.

"By all means," von Schellen returned, quickly, though he was able to perceive that the American had again succeeded in putting him in the wrong.

Just a moment later a petty officer appeared on deck. Taking two or three steps toward the junior officer he halted, saluted, and then remained standing at attention, as though waiting.

Von Schellen stepped over to the man, and a

conversation followed in low tones, but did not last long.

"If you care to remain on deck and watch," said the junior lieutenant, "you will see something that may interest you."

CHAPTER XII

GERMAN BRUTALITY AT ITS WORST

JUST behind the conning tower a jointed steel mast was raised and stepped by three seamen who came at the petty officer's order.

Farther astern a narrow, ledge-like trapdoor of steel was raised, and from this was taken and stepped another steel jointed mast. The seamen now worked quickly in rigging aerial wires in place. In a very short time the work was completed, and the petty officer saluted von Schellen.

"You cannot fail to understand what we are doing," hinted the young German officer.

"You are about to send or receive radio messages, I take it," Dave replied.

"You have been told, of course, that we always report our whereabouts after dark?"

"Yes, it is common knowledge with the Allies," Dave admitted. "And also that you receive in-

structions from the home offices of your Admiralty."

There was a crackling sound on the aerials, followed by others, some short, some long.

"A wonderful invention, is it not?" asked von Schellen, with satisfaction.

"Yes, and first developed outside of Germany," Dave bantered, good-humoredly.

"True enough, but we have known how to take the radio and adapt it to all our needs," retorted von Schellen.

"Your operator is now reporting your whereabouts, of course."

"That would seem likely, wouldn't it?" the other demanded.

"And then you will receive information."

"Yes; and sometimes we have even messages for our men from their homes," laughed von Schellen. "More! I have even had tender messages from my sweetheart! And have answered them in kind!"

For a moment Dave stared in astonishment. He knew von Schellen for a truly heartless brute. The idea that any woman could love this fellow came almost as a shock. And that Schellen could have any tender feelings! Wonders would never cease.

"Of what are you thinking, if I may ask?" the German went on.

"After information coming to you," Darrin hinted, "it almost goes without saying that you receive your orders."

"Surely we receive them," nodded the German, "if we happen to need any. But in our line of professional work, after we have received information we do not often need orders. We know how to use our information."

"Of course," Dave went on, "any other radio operator who is within hearing distance can pick up your messages, so you do not send them in open German but use a code, or rather, a series of codes."

"If your radio men have ever picked up any of our messages," retorted the young German, "you must know that you were not able to decipher their meaning."

"We could not always decipher them," Darrin admitted.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, it is possible, of course, that sometimes we and our Allies have some keys to the German use of code messages."

"You assert that?" questioned von Schellen, rather eagerly.

"No, and I do not deny it, either," Dave smiled.

"You are interesting, but discreet," complained the German, banteringly.

"And I may say as much of you," Dave con-

tinued. "Naturally, you know some things that you would not tell me, and I know a few things that I would not dream of telling you."

"And, instead, you hint at things that are not so, and perhaps I do about the same thing," returned von Schellen.

After that silence fell for some minutes. Dave walked back and forth, the junior officer watching him keenly.

Overhead the crackling at the aerials continued, with occasional intervals of silence when the operator below was busy receiving messages.

Again a petty officer approached von Schellen, saluting and reporting in an undertone.

"It is time for you to go below," announced von Schellen, turning to Dave.

"I appreciate very much this opportunity to take the fresh air," Dave said, politely, as he turned toward the conning tower.

"Oh, I guess you're welcome," said the lieutenant, shortly, and with a meaning smile, "though sometimes there is such a thing as too much outdoor life."

To Darrin's mild astonishment, as he stepped below, a folding table had been set up, and around this were seated the ober-lieutenant and two other officers, one of them an engineer. Von Schellen, at a nod from his chief, made the fourth at the table.

Into this cabin were brought the English couple and the Danish master. Several sailors stood about. The occasion began to take on a formal look, which was heightened when the ober-lieutenant laid on the table a small sheaf of papers.

"First of all, you, Herr Darrin," began the ober-lieutenant. "There can be no doubt that you are Darrin?"

Dave thrust a hand in under his sheepskin, bringing to light a card-case. From it he withdrew a pasteboard which he laid on the table.

"That is my card," he said.

The ober-lieutenant studied it deliberately, then passed it to another officer as he continued:

"And you do not deny that it was you who captured Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold of the Imperial German Navy. You were the principal witness against him when he was tried in Britain for being a spy?"

"I do not deny it, sir."

"That is all. You may step back."

As Darrin drew back he could not escape the feeling that two of the seamen near him regarded him as being their especial prisoner.

"And now, the Earl and Countess of Denby," called the ober-lieutenant.

The English couple remained as motionless and appeared as unconcerned as though they had not heard.

"You two, I mean," insisted the ober-lieutenant, turning to them.

"Oh," said the man, and stepped forward, his wife following him.

The ober-lieutenant eyed the pair impressively before he asked them:

"You do not deny that you are the Earl and Countess of Denby?"

"No," replied the man.

"Ah! Then you admit it?"

"No," he said, promptly.

"But either you must be, or you cannot be, the noble couple whom I have named. Which is it?"

"That is for you to determine," replied the man.

"But what do you say yourselves?"

"Nothing."

"But you must answer my question!" the commanding officer insisted angrily.

"You fatigue me," declared the man.

"You have not answered my question, and won't?"

"We have nothing to say."

Frowning, the ober-lieutenant whispered to a petty officer, who had placed on the table the same album that von Schellen had brought to the ward-room door. The commanding officer opened the album, pointing to two photographs that adorned a page.

"These are your photographs, are they not?"

he demanded, glancing up at the pair. But no reply came from them.

"At least," said the ober-lieutenant, stiffly, "you have been given abundant opportunity to deny, and have declined to do so. Our imperial government has had sufficient information that you two have recently entered the British secret service. It is even known to the imperial government that you two recently undertook to penetrate into Germany, under even another assumed name than Launce, and that you planned to spy upon what was to be learned along the Kiel Canal. You even had some of your arrangements made for performing that seemingly very difficult piece of spy work. You have been charged, and you refuse to deny. It is the same as a confession on your parts. The Earl and Countess of Denby will stand aside."

Two sailors, at a sign from the ober-lieutenant, drew the English pair back.

"Martin Kennor, once master of the Danish freight steamer 'Rigsdak!'" called the commander.

Promptly the Danish skipper stood forward.

"There can be no doubt at all that you answer the description just given?" demanded the ober-lieutenant.

"None vatever," agreed Kennor.

"The only fault to be found with you," con-

tinued the ober-lieutenant, "is that you had the misfortune to be found in such company, and that later on your tongue might prove too long and ready. That is all!"

Von Schellen, again on his feet, signalled to some of the seamen, then said:

"The prisoners will follow me."

To the amazement of all he led the way to the conning tower. After him the sailors herded the four prisoners of war. They ascended the ladder, the Englishwoman being the last of the four. Her husband and Captain Kennor assisted her as she stepped through the manhole to the deck outside.

"But this is unkind," she declared, with a shiver. "My husband and I have not our outer wraps, and the night is chilly."

"I will mention the matter," replied von Schellen, stiffly.

The wireless masts and aerials had disappeared. As the four passengers stood on the deck and wondered, the seamen entered the submarine through the manhole in the wake of von Schellen. When the last of them had gone into the conning tower the junior lieutenant re-appeared at the manhole to call:

"A pleasant evening for four!"

Then the manhole cover was closed and there came to those on deck a muffled sound connected with fastening it on the inside.

"What does this new insolence mean?" cried the Englishwoman.

"If you do not guess, you must soon know," replied her husband, throwing an arm about her. It was then that Mrs. Launce understood. She turned pale, but did not cry out.

Perhaps a full minute passed before the submarine began to move forward. Dave Darrin, familiar with the sounds from below, knew that the rumble of machinery coming to his ears was caused, not by the engines used in surface running, but by the electric motors employed when running under water.

"The brutes are going to drown us, as they did the hapless sailors they took from our boat!" gasped the Englishwoman.

"Yes, my dear," replied her husband, "and you have said that you would prefer drowning to being a prisoner in Germany."

"I still say it," she answered quietly.

"We are to have our wish," said her husband.

Dave Darrin remained immobile; Captain Kennor shrugged his shoulders without speaking.

The prow of the craft dipped into the water, which soon came creeping up around their ankles. The forward deck was now out of sight, the water in which they stood rising toward their knees.

CHAPTER XIII

FACING THE PLANNED DEATH

TURNING to Darrin the Englishman held out his hand.

"Good-bye" he said, simply. "You have been a good comrade. I trust you have not been disappointed in us, either."

"Let's not say good-bye yet," urged Dave cheerfully. "Surely we are not going to give up and drown, merely because a lot of German rascals so will it."

"But we cannot last long in the water," protested the Englishman, mildly.

"At least, sir," Dave suggested, "we shall not die until we have to. You swim?"

"Once I did."

"Then you can swim now. The sea is nearly smooth. Let us try to keep together. And you, Captain Kennor? You swim?"

"Yes."

"Good. We'll keep together as long as we can."

At this moment the Englishwoman, the shortest of the quartette, gave a little cry as she found her footing giving way beneath her.

"All together!" cried Darrin, with a cheeriness he did not feel, as he gripped the woman's left arm.

Another drop of the deck sent them all adrift. The Englishman supported his wife on her right. Captain Kennor, nearly silent, but undaunted, swam slightly behind the others that he might offer aid wherever needed.

Strangely enough, though the swimmers spoke to each other occasionally, none now referred to the dastardly conduct of the enemy in setting them thus adrift to drown.

"You are cold, my dear, I know," said the Englishman to his wife. "Are you suffering otherwise?"

"No; but though I would not willingly drown myself, I shall not be sorry when we give up and go down."

"Had I felt that way the last time I found myself in the water," spoke up Dave, "I would not be here now."

"You had on a life belt. Now none of us has," answered the Englishwoman, her teeth chattering. "We cannot last long."

"After my last experience, madam," Dave assured her, "I shall never dare say that as long as life lasts."

"Why not face facts calmly?" she asked. "Probably I shall last a quarter of an hour before

I die of cold. I may survive for twenty minutes or a little longer. You are strong, and may keep up for an hour or more. What can possibly come to our aid in that short time?"

"Who can say?" was Dave's counter-question.

For some time, they swam in silence. They did not attempt to make progress. Motion enough to keep afloat was all that was called for.

All at once Dave wondered whether his eyes were playing him tricks, or whether he really saw the top of a conning tower approaching him. It was not likely that the enemy would remain about, and come back to see how it fared with the victims of their cruelty.

Then the something in the water took on another vague shape. Darrin shook his head in an effort to get the water out of his eyes. He peered again. The shape, whatever it was, and if it really existed, was beginning to get on his nerves. It seemed to come nearer.

"Captain Kennor!" called Darrin, sharply.

"Aye!" responded the Dane.

"Are you still swimming strongly?"

"Aye!"

"Then will you swim ahead and see what it is that my eyes show me on the water?"

"Oh, aye!"

With lusty strokes the Dane swam around him, and then ahead.

"A little more to the left!" called Dave.

Then Captain Kennor believed that he saw it, too, and headed straight for the object. Getting nearer he sent back a real cheer.

"What is it?" Darrin called.

"A spar!"

"Any size?"

"Large enough us to hold all up! Swim dis vay! Alone, can I hardly push it to you."

Neither Dave nor the Englishman needed urging. They swam, still bearing the woman between them. The sight of the Dane ahead of them holding to the spar with one arm, and holding up the other hand, heartened them wonderfully.

Soon all three had gained the spar, and Captain Kennor, drawing a cord from his pocket, soon succeeded in lashing the Englishwoman so securely to the spar that she could not slip away and perish.

"Now, you will remember what I said about not giving up," Dave reminded his companions.

"Why, yes, I am buoyed up, and perhaps you men can manage to hold on, also," admitted the woman. "Yet we must freeze to death."

"We will still dare to hope," Darrin replied, calmly.

"You are a splendid inspiration, Mr. Darrin!" declared the Englishman, heartily. "I wish I could believe that you are a true prophet, as well."

"Oh, well," spoke Dave, with a lightness that was deceptive, "I've really been in several worse scrapes than the present one."

But to himself he added:

"May I be forgiven for uttering what seems to me to be a possibly helpful lie!"

Though they were now safely afloat for some time to come, their situation rapidly became worse, owing to the increasing cold. Especially was this noticeable in the case of the Englishwoman.

From time to time her eyes closed. When spoken to she had to exert considerable effort to shake off her languor before she could reply. She became still more drowsy; evidently she was on the verge of freezing to death. From speaking kindly her husband dropped into sharp tones for the sole purpose of keeping her awake. Presently he was forced to resort to light blows in order to bully her into wakefulness. Once she fell soundly asleep she would not again awake.

As for Captain Kennor, he held on almost dumbly. He seldom spoke, his eyes mournfully regarding the woman whose battle for life was slowly being lost.

"This is awful!" cried the Englishman, hoarsely, after another effort to rouse his wife from slumber.

"For all of us," Darrin admitted, "though there is still hope."

"Where?" inquired Captain Kennor.

"I do not know," Dave confessed. "Yes, I do, too, though! Look yonder! No, in that direction!"

At first the others could not make it out. Captain Kennor was the first to see what Dave had found. It was only a low, dark cloud on the horizon, and it looked as though smaller clouds detached themselves and sailed away on the low-hanging sky.

"I see it, too!" cried the Englishman, at last. "But what is it?"

"A ship," Dave answered. "To be more exact, it looks like a destroyer, and it looks too as though it might pass within a quarter of a mile of us."

"Look, my dear — look!" the Englishman urged his wife, shaking her in his eagerness to have her realize the thread of hope that dangled before their eyes. "A ship coming! We are to be saved."

Her eyes opened at last; the woman struggled bravely to show interest in the sight that half-cheered the others, but she could not. She was too far gone, and her eyes closed again.

"Keep your wife awake, sir, if you have to begin to pull her hair from her head!!" It was a command. "See how near that craft is getting. Jove, sir! I believe it is one of our own Yankee ships!"

"But they will not come close enough to see us," objected Captain Kennor, with the practiced eyes of the veteran seaman. "They are not using their searchlight, and we have no way of signalling to them."

Without speaking Darrin tried a desperate hope. In one of his hands something gleamed out into the night.

"What is it?" demanded the Dane. "Himmel! Der flashlight! Vere or ven did you by dat come?"

"I found it in the locker of our sleeping cabin, and hid it in my clothes," Dave answered, as he again tested the light. "I did not want to speak of it unless there should come some hope to us. This light was evidently left by some German who had used that cabin. It's waterproof, too. When I found it I had a hope that it might come in handy before I got through with this adventure. And now!"

Waiting only a minute or two longer, Dave, clinging to the spar with one arm, held the other hand as high aloft as he could.

"Help!" he signalled by flashes in the Morse code. "Help!"

"It is such a tiny glow, to carry so far!" sighed the Englishman.

"Maybe id vill seen be," said Captain Kennor.

Dave continued to signal until, to his great joy,

there came an answering signal from a blinker light which asked:

"Who are you?"

"Four castaways, clinging to a spar. Help before we freeze!" Dave flashed back, desperately.

"If only the commander of that boat does not suspect us of being a German submarine springing a trap!" cried the Englishwoman.

A searchlight flashed up, then its broad beam stretched across the waters as the operator tried to pick up the floating ones.

Dave threw the flash into a continuous light while the searchlight beam continued groping. Then, in a blessed instant, the beam struck almost blindingly across the spar and the four human beings held up by it.

"Now, they've spotted us," Dave cried, exultingly. "They won't run away and leave us without a look-in."

Holding the spar with the searchlight beam, the destroyer changed its course, bearing down rapidly upon them. Then it stopped and a motor launch was lowered from davits.

With a burst of speed the launch came alongside the spar. Busy hands were outstretched. The Englishwoman was the first to be taken aboard, after a few quick slashes had freed her from the binding cord.

"Why, here's Lieutenant Commander Darrin!"

"Help!"

exclaimed a voice. Dave, almost too weak to speak, was hustled into the boat, then the other two men were taken over.

Blankets were wrapped about the rescued ones, and the launch dashed back to her ship.

"A woman, Lieutenant Commander Darrin and two other men!" the officer in charge of the launch hailed the destroyer.

"Darrin!" cried a voice. There was even greater bustle at the top of the gangway that had been lowered as the launch ran alongside. As swiftly as possible the four rescued ones were rushed up the side.

"Old Darry himself, eh?" cried a joyous voice, as Danny Grin hurried up. "Has the woman any relative in the party?"

"Yes; her husband," Dave answered weakly, then collapsed.

"Take the woman and her husband to my quarters," Dalzell directed. "Have a cot put in and lashed for the husband, and put the woman in the berth. Mr. Darrin and the other man will go to the sick bay."

Willing hands bore the rescued ones as ordered. Dan himself followed Dave's bearers down to the sick bay and there supervised the treatment given Dave and Captain Kennor, while the medical officer went to Dan's quarters, the best on the craft.

The Englishman was soon more comfortable. His wife, however, required serious attention. Dalzell shook his head over Dave, who appeared all in and not able to talk.

"Was he in the water longer than the rest of you?" asked Dalzell, as soon as Captain Kennor was able to talk.

"No; but he vas der water in vonce before," was the reply. "Der second time he could stand not so well."

That gave Dan the clue. As soon as the medical officer could be spared from the care of the Englishwoman for a few moments he was ordered to the sick bay.

"Mr. Darrin may pull through, but I won't guarantee anything," said the surgeon, after an examination. "The chances are all against him. I am afraid the woman is going to die also."

CHAPTER XIV

DAVE PLEDGES HIS WORD FOR RESULTS

THAT double report helped Dan Dalzell to make up his mind.

"Run straight for port," he ordered the executive officer, naming the nearest British haven that offered rail connection.

In an hour and a half the destroyer had dropped anchor at the port.

More medical aid was brought aboard, including a trained nurse for the Englishwoman.

A few hours after daylight the woman had recovered sufficiently to warrant her removal to a hospital on shore. No strong hopes were yet entertained of keeping her alive for more than a day or two. Her husband had stood the watery ordeal much better.

Captain Kennor, who, with Dave, was taken to the hospital later in the day, had nearly recovered by the day following.

But for Dave Darrin there followed black hours. According to the doctors a severe case of pneumonia was about the best that could be predicted for him.

On the day after he was taken ashore Darrin opened his eyes with a light of recognition in them. At the foot of the cot, in a chair, sat a stalwart, youthful figure. Dan Dalzell, whose orders took him to sea again that night, was waiting to the last for better news.

"Dan," Dave called, softly, and Dalzell was instantly bending over him.

"David, little giant, did you know that the 'Reed' had the good luck to pick you up?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"I had a notion of it, but I was too dazed to know really," Darrin answered.

"I've been here about all the time ever since," Dan went on. "I wanted to know the news of you as soon as it could be had. But you're going to be all right, now."

"Of course I am," agreed Dave, feebly.

Unseen by the man on the hospital cot, Dan signalled with one hand. Down the ward came a doctor, followed by a young woman wearing the blue cape ulster of the Red Cross. There was a quick, glad cry; soft lips touched Dave's face.

"Belle!" gasped Dave, delightedly.

"I'm going to be allowed to sit by you quite a bit, dear, if you don't try to talk to me," replied the steady voice of Belle Darrin. Summoned by cable sent by Dan, Belle had journeyed swiftly from France.

"And now I'm off and back to my ship, Belle," said Dan. "But I know you'll find a way to get a radio message through to me when Dave is improved enough to warrant it. Good-bye, Darry, old chap!"

And Dan was off, not because he didn't want to stay, but because he knew his chum would want to see the most of Belle. As for that young woman, who held none too positive hopes of Darrin's recovery after what the doctors had told her, she forced herself to be calm and smiling and sat close by, her hand on Dave's forehead when he dropped off into a feverish, troubled sleep.

The next day Belle chatted with her husband a little, in a cool, steady voice. Two days after that Dave was actually permitted to sit up.

On the sixth day after he had been taken to the hospital Dave was mending so rapidly that Belle, who was obliged to leave that afternoon for her Red Cross post in France, felt wholly easy in mind as to his condition.

"It was a lucky chain of events, my two swims in the channel," Darrin told her before they parted.

"Lucky, when the experience nearly cost you your life?" exclaimed Belle.

"It gave you an excuse for coming to me, and gave me the time and leisure to be with you."

"Dave Darrin, you don't mean any such thing!

You are needed aboard your ship, and I am needed for my work in France, and nothing can be called really good luck that takes either of us away from his post of duty in war-time."

"You little patriot!" Dave laughed, jestingly.

"You believe it just as much as I do," Belle maintained stoutly. "I'm glad to have been here with you, dear, but I shall be glad to find myself back at my post. And you know you are glad that you will return to your ship tomorrow."

"If she comes in," Darrin amended.

"Dave, aren't you nearly wild to get back to duty?" she persisted.

"Yes, I am, for as you say, dear, we are all needed at the posts assigned to us. There is another reason why I must get back. The work that has been cut out for us is not proceeding as it should. We have made some good 'catches' in the way of mines, yet the fact is that mines are being planted much faster than we have been taking them up. I must get back to duty and see if I can find out what is wrong."

Buttoning his overcoat tightly Dave Darrin walked with Belle to the railway station. The train left so soon after their arrival that there were not many moments left the young couple for leave-taking. After the train had started Dave watched it out of sight. There had been something uncomfortable in his throat, but as he

turned away the lump vanished and his jaws set squarely.

"Now, my work is cut out for me," he told himself. "I can do only one man's part in this war, but I must do that to the limit and try to make the world a safe place of residence for that little woman and all others like her!"

No sooner was the "Grigsby" in port, the next forenoon, than Lieutenant Fernald came ashore and straight to the hospital.

"Going on board today, sir?" was Fernald's greeting.

"You couldn't keep me ashore any longer," Darrin declared.

"Good enough!" said the executive officer, heartily. "We need you, sir! We've been doing our best, but the enemy has been gaining on us. Last night two ships struck mines and went down before rescue could reach them. The Germans are beating us at this mine game, and something must be done, which, of course, sir, is another way of saying that a way must be found to do the right and necessary thing."

"I've been thinking that over for twenty-four hours," Darrin went on. "As soon as we are aboard I want to talk the whole situation over with you. Will Dalzell be in today?"

"In about an hour, sir, I think. He needs fuel and some food supplies."

"Then we'll hold a council of war in the chart-room," Dave decided, as he buttoned up his coat. "I'm ready, Fernald."

Dave had already thanked the hospital authorities, and taken leave of them, so the two young naval officers passed outside, made their way down to the water front, and soon thereafter stepped aboard the "Grigsby," reporting their arrival on board to the watch officer. Dave also saw that the forward gun damaged in the fight with the German destroyers had been replaced by a new one. From the gangway they went direct to the chart-room.

"I'll hear the reports on the work now, Fernald," Dave announced.

Two of the papers that came under Dave's hand especially interested him. One was a detailed list of the ships that had struck mines during the last week in the waters in which he and Dalzell had been operating. The other document contained a report on the discovery and sinking of one fighting submarine and one submarine mine-layer.

From these reports Dave turned to the charts of the local waters. When Fernald came back with Dan Dalzell, Dave was still poring over the charts.

"From the rapid way in which German mines are being planted in these waters," Dave told his

brother officers, "I am satisfied that the enemy submarines do not usually go all the way back to the base port. I believe that the mine-layers are often met by other craft that supply them with mines, and that the submarine mine-layers return quickly to the job of planting mines. Now, the sea area in which the mines are planted leads me to feel certain that the mine-layers rest frequently on these three shoals."

Dave pointed on the chart to the shoals in question.

"How many mine-sweeping craft have we now under our orders?" he inquired.

"Nine," said Dan, promptly.

"How many of them can we spare from mine-sweeping?"

"None," Dalzell replied, positively.

"Either we must spare some, or we must have some sweeper craft added to our fleet," Dave went on. "There are three of these shoals, and hereafter I want two mine-sweepers to spend their time dragging their wires over each shoal. That will take six craft, and these will not have time to do any sweeping in the open sea. We cannot clean up the mines themselves with three craft, can we?"

"Plainly not," Dan agreed, "since, with all nine, we have not been able to find and take up all the mines we should have located."

"Then we shall have to have more craft," Dave nodded. "Yet if we cannot have more craft assigned to this work, we must go ahead with what we have and do more work. But I believe that the hunt over the shoals should be kept up day and night, without rest, for I am satisfied that the enemy mine-layers rest on these shoals more frequently than we have supposed."

After some further conversation Dave had his launch cleared away and went over to a British battleship for a conference with the British admiral in command in those waters. The best the admiral could do was to supply him with three of the hundred-and-ten-foot patrol boats. These, however, were provided with sweepers and possessed good speed.

"I hope you're right, Mr. Darrin," said the admiral, at the close of the interview. "To be frank with you, your predecessor in the work of cleaning up enemy mines in this area was a British naval officer, considerably older than yourself. He is a very capable man in many ways, but we felt that he had been so long on coast work that he was growing much too stale. So, when I decided to transfer him to other duties I thought of trying one of your American officers, a young man, full of spirit, and fresh for this work. So I asked your admiral for some one, and he sent Dalzell and yourself."

"So far," said Dave, "I have not done any better than my English predecessor, sir?"

"Frankly you have not, yet we must remember to deduct your very necessary week in hospital. However, you have done some other excellent things. The capture of the mine-laying neutral, the 'Olga,' for instance, was a splendid bit of work. The fight that you and Mr. Dalzell had with the three enemy destroyers was a fine job. But the mines in these waters continue to be as much of a menace as before."

"They won't be, by this time next week, sir. I promise that," said Dave, rising. "How soon can the commanders of the three patrol boats report to me?"

"At once. All three are here in the harbor, and, I am told, they are ready to put to sea."

"Then, sir, I propose, within a week, to hand you a wholly satisfactory report," Darrin went on. "I had to put in some time on the ground, and it was necessary to study a new problem. Then came a series of adventures that took me out of the work for a while. But now, sir, I hope to show you something new — results!"

CHAPTER XV

DARRIN SUSPECTS THE GERMAN PLAN

THE three shoals selected by Darrin extended over a length of about thirty miles along the coast. It was the center one of these shoals on which he had had prevous experience.

Further, it was arranged that Dalzell should, in general, cruise along the lower fifteen miles of this stretch, while the "Grigsby" should cover the upper half. From time to time the two destroyers would meet.

After sending three mine-sweepers and the three patrol boats to the shoals, two craft to each shoal, Darrin saw to it that the other six were assigned to duty in the deeper waters off shore.

Then, with a hearty signal to the "Reed," the "Grigsby" started northward. She steamed by the southernmost shoal, and was passing the second when Darrin was called to the bridge by Ensign Ormsby.

"That patrol boat in there signals that she has made a find, sir, so I have changed the course and am heading in."

Dave's eyes gleamed as he made out the next signal from the patrol, which was:

"Soundings show her to be a big craft. Shall we rig the small bombs on the sweep wires?"

"Wait until we arrive," was the answering signal from the "Grigsby."

In a few minutes the destroyer was within hailing distance of the patrol boat, which was lying to in the neighborhood of the find.

"The enemy submarine appears to be at least 275 feet long, sir," reported the patrol boat commander.

"Then a depth bomb should do the business better," Dave shouted back through the megaphone. "Sail over the craft with your sweep, and I'll follow. Signal when you judge us to be squarely over her."

Under bare headway the "Grigsby" fell in behind the now slow-moving patrol boat. Almost at once the wire sweeps discovered the hull of the hiding monster.

Ahead steamed the patrol boat, the destroyer following. Aft two men stood by the depth bomb apparatus. Down came the white flag of the British signalman on the smaller craft.

Dave's hand rested on the telegraph lever to the engine-room. He signalled for full speed ahead, then at the proper moment he shouted:

"Let her go!"

An instant later the bomb splashed into the water.

Immediately following the splash there came a sullen, rending roar under water. A great column of water leaped up from the sea, a heavy volume of it landing on the after deck of the destroyer, all but washing overboard one of the lookouts. The pressure of water fairly lifted the stern of the "Grigsby" until her bow dipped far in.

Ensign Ormsby was thrown flat, almost rolling from the bridge. Dave, fortunately, had taken a grip that saved him from falling.

It seemed as though the destroyer herself had been blown up, but she quickly settled and scooted ahead at a furious rate.

"Half speed ahead," Darrin signalled, as soon as he could let go his grip, and the "Grigsby" slowed down. At the same time she swung around.

Even at that distance the huge spread of oil on the surface could be seen. A wild Yankee cheer rose, which was promptly echoed by the British tars of the patrol boat.

"No depth bomb ever made that upheaval," Dave gasped, as soon as he could speak, and Mr. Ormsby, much shaken, had picked himself up. "The bombs are ugly affairs, but that felt like the explosion of about ten of them."

"Did you notice, sir, that the explosion lasted more than twice as long as we've ever known one to last before?" the watch officer asked.

"Yes."

"Then what happened, sir?"

"Either our explosion touched off a torpedo, which does not seem likely, or else —"

For an instant what he was about to say sounded so absurd that Darrin hesitated.

"Well, sir —?" queried Ormsby.

"Or else that was a mine-layer, with a full cargo of mines aboard, all ready for business, and — But you'll think I've gone daffy."

"No, I won't, sir; not after the way this ship rose out of the water," the watch officer declared. "You mean, sir, that our bomb went off right over that craft's cargo of mines, and that the shock must have set off the mines."

"That's certainly the way it looks to me," Darrin nodded.

"I believe it, sir."

Just a few moments later the patrol boat came within hail. Through his megaphone Darrin stated what he believed had taken place.

"It's the only thing to account, sir, for such a tremendous explosion," replied the commander of the patrol. "I've been on hand to see a lot of depth bombs go off, and I never saw an upheaval like the one you produced, sir."

"Have soundings taken, Mr. Ormsby," Darrin directed. The depth of the water was quickly reported. Dave glanced at the sky.

"The light will be strong enough for another

hour," he decided. "Have our two divers prepare to go down at once."

A launch, cleared away with the divers on board, was anchored in the middle of the oil spot. Two divers went over the side. Presently they signalled for extra cables. When these were let down they attached pieces of metal and gave the signal to haul away.

By the time that the hour was up Darrin had abundant evidence to prove that he had destroyed a mine-layer, and that his bomb had blown up several mines stored on the craft. This evidence took the form of fragments of mines.

"Some of these pieces must even have been driven up against our hull," Darrin declared. "It is a wonder that we were not sunk."

"The counter pressure of the water would lessen the force of these fragments, especially after they had been blown out through the shell of the submarine," Lieutenant Fernald argued. "But I agree with you, sir, that it's a wonder the 'Grigsby' suffered nothing worse than a shaking."

Other evidence, too, the divers sent up. The destroyed craft had surely been a mine-laying submarine. The divers measured the length of the wrecked hull, finding it to be close to three hundred feet. They reported, too, that scores of German dead lay in the wreckage.

For hours nothing more happened. Just before

ten o'clock that night the mine-sweeper's blinkers signalled a call to the "Grigsby," then about four miles distant.

"They've found something," Darrin chuckled, when he reached the bridge on a call from Lieutenant Fernald.

As the "Grigsby" was heading in toward the shoal, and had some minutes still to go, Darrin asked:

"Mr. Fernald, you had a second and even more thorough inspection of the hull made, as I directed?"

"Yes, sir; and found the hull so secure that I did not wake you to tell you, sir. There has been no strain of the plates sufficient to start any of them."

"I'm thankful to hear that," Darrin acknowledged. "Even with the big, elastic cushion of water between us and that awful explosion, it seems almost incredible that we did not wreck ourselves as well as the enemy."

"You've found another submarine?" Dave shouted through the megaphone, as he rang for slow speed and ran parallel with the waiting snub-nosed craft.

"We've found two somethings, sir," came back the reply. "They lie about four hundred feet apart and heading in the same direction. I can find them again, sir, but I didn't go back over them for fear they'd take the alarm and run for it."

"Perhaps they have," Darrin suggested.

"I've dropped small buoys, sir, and can lead you over them."

"Then do so, and travel at full speed. Be prepared to get out of our way if we come fast after dropping."

Even the two cool-headed sailors who stood by the depth bomb apparatus stiffened themselves as they found the "Grigsby" following in the wake of the mine-sweeper. The after lookouts lashed themselves fast against injury by any such surprise as that of the afternoon.

As the signal flashed from the mine-sweeper ahead Dave passed the order for the bomb instantly after ordering full speed.

There was an explosion, but an ordinary one, such as this crew of the destroyer was accustomed to.

At full speed, too, Dave tried for the second hidden enemy boat. There was barely time to have the second bomb in place when signal and order came.

Another terrific explosion, like that of the afternoon! It seemed as though the waters must divide! Yet the "Grigsby," moving fast all the time, felt the shock severely, but not like the one of the afternoon.

About the destroyer came, playing her searchlight on the waters. The tell-tale oil patches were

there, showing only too plainly that two submarine craft had been destroyed.

"Apparently one craft carried no mines, while the other was loaded with them," said Dave to his executive officer. "Fernald, I think I'm beginning to get an idea of the way the enemy are working their mine-laying game. If I'm right we'll make a record along this patch of shoals while the hunting lasts."

Patiently Fernald listened and waited, but did not speak. He hoped to hear what his chief's idea was, but it was not the executive officer's place to ask for it.

"I may even be able to figure out when the best time would be for hunting these lazy rascals resting on the bottom," Darrin continued.

Mr. Fernald began to show signs of a more active curiosity.

"But I won't say much about it," Darrin smiled, "until I've more data to work on and have proved some part of my theory."

Lieutenant Fernald looked so much like a man who wished to speak that Dave laughed.

"Out with it, Fernald," he urged good-humoredly. "You've an idea, too. You may tell me if you wish."

"Why, sir," replied the executive officer, "I've about concluded that the enemy mine-laying submarines do not go back to base port for more

mines. They have some method for delivering them near here, and thus the mine-layers are able to keep more steadily at work."

"That fits in excellently with my idea," Darrin nodded.

"And that would account for the great numbers of mines that the enemy is able to lay hereabouts, and yet not have many of the craft caught by us," Lieutenant Fernald continued.

"Exactly," Dave agreed. "Moreover, the mine-layers take on their new supplies at night, and do their resting here at night, and get away from these shoals just before daylight."

"Of course," Fernald agreed. "If they rested here much in the daytime the aircraft would discover and destroy them."

"We'll both keep at work on our ideas, Fernald," Dave proposed. "Besides, we can take time to find facts to support our theories. Then we can get together and start in the biggest smashing of mine-laying craft on record."

Both paused in their talk to listen to the sudden boom of guns. Judged by the sound and the wind, the firing was some six miles away.

"Lookout there!" Darrin sang out. "Do you see anything?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply from aloft. "It must be the 'Reed,' sir. She must have gotten into something stiff, for she's moving shoreward at slow

speed and firing as fast as she can serve her guns. She's firing in shoreward, sir."

CHAPTER XVI

HITTING CLOSE TO THE SALT TRAIL

"GIVE us a rocket signal if you need help," Dave signalled the attendant mine-sweeper.

Then to the officer of the watch:

"Give us full speed, and we'll run down to see if the 'Reed' has work enough for two of our kind."

A little further south he signalled same orders to the patrol boat that he had given to the mine-sweeper.

Then the "Grigsby" rushed onward as if she scented something of which she did not wish her crew to be deprived.

As soon as Darrin discovered that Dalzell was using his searchlight he ordered the "Grigsby's" also to be used. Over the waters the bar of light swept until it picked up a sight that made the officers on the bridge gasp for sheer astonishment.

Two submarines, some five hundred yards apart, lay on the surface of the sea.

Strangest part of all, neither craft was serving

its guns. Why they neither fought nor dived puzzled the "Grigsby's" officers until the "Reed's" guns ceased firing and her blinkers signalled to Dave:

"Don't fire on them unless I do. They're helpless."

The "Reed," first to approach the submarines, steamed in between them. Then as the "Grigsby" raced up, she received this message from Dalzell:

"Wish you would take charge of the nearer submarine. I'll handle the other."

On both enemy craft, as seen under the searchlight, the German crews had come out on deck. It was clear that they wished to surrender without further loss of life.

So Dave ordered a launch cleared away, with a prize crew armed to the teeth, Ensign Andrews in command.

"You men get as far forward as possible," Andrews shouted to the huddled enemy. "Be careful not to have any weapons about you. We'll accept you as prisoners of war, but any attempt at treachery will be sternly punished!"

As he spoke the ensign rested one hand on the barrel of a machine gun in the launch's bow. Instantly the Germans began to move forward, only their four officers remaining near the conning tower

"Stand by to catch a line and make fast," called

the ensign, as the launch, under headway, lay in close.

Though they plainly understood, not one of the German officers made a move to catch a rope. Instead, one of them called to the huddled seamen, two of whom came back to take the line.

Making fast, Andrews stepped aboard, followed by some of his armed crew.

"You are the only officers of this craft?" Andrews demanded.

"Yes," sullenly replied the ober-lieutenant.

"Be good enough to hold up your hands while we search you."

Though their eyes flashed their rage, the German officers raised their hands while a petty officer "frisked" them one after the other.

"None of them armed, sir," was the report.

"Then into the launch with them. Next, order the seamen and engine-tenders aft and search them. The launch will carry about twenty prisoners on the first trip."

Soon the score of prisoners had been delivered aboard the "Grigsby." A second lot was sent over, after which Andrews decided that he could take charge of the remainder on their own craft. He now had force enough with him to keep this unarmed remainder in subjection.

Heading an armed party the ensign went below in the submarine to make an inspection. He had

already noted a shell-hole through the hull which had made it impossible for this submarine to dive without drowning the crew. But he found other matters to interest him. This was a mine-layer craft, and at the present moment she had more than twenty mines on board.

One of Dalzell's junior officers, searching the other submarine, found her to be a mine-layer, too, but with only two mines on board. This second craft, also, had been pierced through the hull in such fashion that there had been no chance for her to escape by submerging.

On each craft forward a crane had been set up, and still stood. Dan Dalzell's report, when made, shed a good deal of light on German methods.

The "Reed" had been barely drifting when two submarines had come up within two miles of the destroyer. It was the noise of erecting the cranes that had warned Dalzell's watch officer of their presence there on the dark sea.

Suddenly, through night glasses, Dan, who had been called to the bridge, discovered what was taking place. On the quiet waters of this night the two craft had managed to get near enough to each other to attempt to transfer mines from one to the other.

Then it was that the "Reed" had opened fire with her guns, had turned on her searchlight and had rushed in.

As soon as the German commanders found their boats punctured into helplessness they had signalled their surrender.

"But I was glad indeed when I saw you bearing down on us," Dan announced, when he visited his chum a little later. "The enemy had surrendered, but I know enough of German treachery to realize that they might let me drive in close and then try to torpedo me. I needn't have worried, but of course I could not afford to take chances."

Sending for Boatswain's Mate Runkle, Dave inquired:

"Do you speak German?"

"I know about six words, sir; not as many as eight."

"Then you are the man for the job, Runkle. Go down among the prisoners that have been sent on board, the seamen, I mean, not the officers. Act as though you were there on duty, but not very busy. Use your six words of German and make English do for the rest. The German sailors won't understand you, unless some of them speak English. That will be all the better, for as soon as you discover that some of the men don't know what you are saying you will be able to judge which of those who speak no English are the most stupid, or the most likely to talk and tell us the truth. Spot three or four of these stupid ones, and then bring one of them here to the chart-room."

"Now, what on earth does the 'Old Man' want?" wondered Runkle, as he started away on this errand. "But never mind. Even if I can't guess what he wants it's a cinch that he knows. The stupidest one, eh? I wonder why any Fritz wouldn't do, then!"

Runkle found his man within five minutes, detached him from the other prisoners, and led him to the chart-room. Darrin tried his own German on the fellow, asking:

"Your craft had just arrived from the base port?"

The man stared, then slowly nodded.

"How many mines did you have on board when you left the base port?"

"Thirty, I heard."

"You planted some on the way?"

"A few, so I heard."

"Most of the mines you were to deliver here tonight?"

"Yes."

"How many trips a week has your craft been making between here and the base port?"

"Usually about four."

"Did you always deliver, here, to the same mine-layer?"

"No; that was as it happened. Sometimes to one boat, sometimes to another."

"How many mines could your craft carry?"

"Thirty."

As this agreed with the information supplied by Ensign Andrews, Dave believed that the seaman was telling the truth.

"Did your craft always come to these same waters to deliver mines to mine-layers?"

"Always, since I have been aboard, to some one of the shoals in this stretch of them," replied the sailor.

"Do you know how many mine-layers wait over here on the English side to have mines delivered to them?"

"No, but they are not so many."

"A few, supplied four times a week, can plant a lot of mines," quizzed Darrin.

"Oh, yes."

"And the craft you were aboard was one of the smaller ones that brought cargoes of mines. Your people have some that carry much larger numbers of mines?"

"Yes, and the larger boats that bring mines over to the real mine-layers travel faster under water than our boat did."

"So that these larger boats can make at least five round trips a week?" Dave asked.

"Oh, yes."

"You have not told me the name of your base port," Darrin went on.

"And I don't intend to," retorted the seaman.

"You are asking me too many questions. I should not have said as much as I did, and I shall not answer any more questions."

"You do not need to," Dave assured him. "I already know the answers to a lot of questions that I might have asked you. But you look like a reasonable fellow, and also like a fellow fond of some of the good things of life. Had I found you more ready to talk I might have arranged for you to have a pleasanter time in the English prison than your mates will have."

"A pleasanter time until the hangman called for us?" demanded the German, a cunning look coming into his eyes.

"The hangman?" Darrin repeated.

"Oh, yes! I know! We all know. The English hang the crews of German submarines. Our officers have told us all about it. You are wrong, too, to hang us, for it is the knowledge that the English will hang us that makes us fight more desperately when we are attacked."

"But the English will not hang you. You and your mates will be treated as prisoners of war," Darrin assured him. "You will be well fed. You will have some amusements. When spring comes you will have gardens to work in and the flowers or vegetables that you raise will belong to you. It is a stupid lie to tell you that the English hang you all. You will soon be on shore, and in an

English prison camp, and then you will know that you have been lied to. You will enjoy finding yourself on shore, for you were not often allowed to go ashore when you got back from these trips to take on your next mine cargo at —"

It was a simple trap, but as Darrin paused, the seaman replied:

"No, we were not often allowed ashore in ——," naming the port.

The port that the seaman mentioned was the one Darrin had been trying to get him to name. The German had unwittingly allowed himself to name the base port from which the mines were shipped. As soon as the German realized his blunder he used some bad language.

"That is all," said Dave Darrin. "You may go back to your mates, and by daylight you will know that an English military prison is not at all a bad place."

CHAPTER XVII

TRYING OUT THE BIG, NEW PLAN

"YOU see," Dave nodded to his brother officers, "the theory we had worked out about the method of supplying mines to the submarine layers was the right one. I think that we shall be able to show some results to the admiral."

Dan was then instructed to remain to keep watch over the shoals, while the "Grigsby" soon afterwards started for port, escorting the two prizes.

Before daylight the captured under-sea boats were duly turned over to the British authorities. Darrin then sought the admiral, and, despite the lateness of the hour, he was soon admitted.

"What do you need for your enterprise?" inquired the admiral after listening attentively to the plan Dave had unfolded to him.

"Nothing but a dirigible, commanded by the right man," Dave explained.

"That ought not to be difficult," declared the British officer. "You shall have what you want. Now, suppose we go over the chart, to make sure that I understand just what you propose to do."

On the map Darrin traced the course that he felt sure the German underseas craft pursued when bringing cargoes of mines to the other submarines that were laying mines in British waters.

"That would be the natural course for such craft to take," agreed Admiral Wheatleigh. "I trust that you are right in your surmises. If you are, we should have some excellent results within the next few days."

"I shall know, sir, within forty-eight hours, and I think it likely that the enemy will also hear something about it within the next few days. At least, sir, the German admiralty should be able to guess."

Dave took his leave, hastening back to the "Grigsby," which, an hour later, weighed anchor and stood out to sea. By that time Dave was sound asleep, for he had been through a great deal and was sorely in need of rest before he reached the scene of his intended activities.

Some hours later he was called, and was soon on the bridge.

"You are at the point at which you wished to be called," said Fernald when Dave reached the bridge.

"And you will do well to seek your own rest now, Mr. Fernald," Darrin answered. "You can be called, if needed."

Half an hour later Darrin made out, in the sky

astern, a tiny speck that rapidly came closer, and proved to be the dirigible sent at his request.

As the dirigible came nearer signals were rapidly exchanged. The course for the aircraft was made plain. As for the "Grigsby," her speed was slowed down to mere headway and she loafed over the waters.

Two hours passed during which the "blimp" aloft sailed rapidly to and fro in the sky, zig-zagging over the course in a way that covered several square miles in an hour.

"She's found something, sir!" cried Ensign Andrews.

"She has sighted a craft, bound over the course we had suspected," said Darrin, as signals broke out rapidly from the car under the big gas bag. "We'll let the submarine get by us before we start in chase."

Another half hour passed, for, though the dirigible moved swiftly, the underseas craft she was watching was moving only at submerged speed.

Then the chase led on past the "Grigsby." Purposely Darrin allowed it to go by him by about a mile ere he joined in the pursuit. Starting at half speed ahead he soon changed it to full speed.

And now the dirigible had slowed down, until she was travelling, as her signals stated, at just the speed of the submerged craft directly under her.

"We'll go in by the stern and try to make a quick job of it," Darrin proposed, as he gave Andrews final instructions, and turned to see that the signalman with his flag stood well aft on the superstructure.

As the destroyer raced in almost under the dirigible Darrin raised his right hand. The signalman with the flag did the same.

Just as the "Grigsby's" bridge passed in under the tail of the aircraft Dave Darrin read the signal for which he had waited. The airmen were telling him that the bridge of his craft was almost over the bow of the hidden enemy beneath.

Down came Dave's raised hand. Seeing it fall, the signalman let his flag drop.

In that same instant the depth bomb was released for its course over the "Grigsby's" stern.

Almost in the same second there sounded a terrific if muffled report under the surface. The water rose in three distinct columns, lifting the stern of the "Grigsby" and almost burying her bow under.

It was as though a great geyser and an earthquake had met. Columns like waterspouts hurled themselves across and over the reeling destroyer. Even when the "Grigsby's" nose came out and up once more the destroyer rocked in the near tidal wave that the swift series of explosions had produced.

"Pardon me, sir," begged Ensign Andrews, when he had regained control of himself. "I feel constrained to remark, sir, that you appear to know how to get all the thrills out of life."

"We must have landed right over a mine cargo once more," Dave answered smiling. "There were several explosions, but they came nearly together. One of these days we'll start something like that that will send us up half a mile into the air. But it's great sport, Andrews, especially when you pause to think what it all means."

"Great sport for us, but too sudden for the Huns," rejoined the watch officer. "They cannot have had the satisfaction, even, of realizing that anything had hit them."

Satisfied that there would be no more underseas explosions, Darrin gave the order to come about.

That the underseas craft had been struck was indicated clearly enough by the patches of oil on the water. The force of the explosion told the Yankee tars that the craft must have been blown into bits.

"Best thing I ever saw done!" signalled the British officer in command of the "blimp."

"Find us another, and we'll try to show you something just as good," Darrin caused to be signalled back.

Fernald, who had been called, having reported, was sent with the chief engineer to make a hull

inspection below decks. Though some of the hull plates had been dented inward enough to attract attention, no leak could be found. The "Grigsby" was as seaworthy as ever, though after that rocking shock this seemed a marvel.

Off in the distance the "blimp" soon became a mere speck to the watchful eyes of those on the destroyer.

Dave directed that the aircraft be followed at cruising speed so long as she remained in sight. When the dirigible was at last lost to view the destroyer lay to, her lookouts using their glasses.

"Think the aircraft is coming back, sir," reported a lookout from the military mast.

From where he stood on the bridge Darrin could make out nothing for several minutes, though in the interval the lookout aloft reported that he could make out the "blimp" with surety, and that she appeared to be flying a signal, though he could not see what it was.

Then from the bridge the "blimp" became visible. A little later, too, the flag signal could be seen and read.

"Following another submarine," was what the signal said.

Going to starboard of the course Darrin advanced at ordinary speed to meet the "blimp," which, as in the former case, was flying just barely astern of the hidden monster, so that the forward

British airman lookout could discern the shape of the craft that was being pursued.

Dave waited until the dirigible had passed. He then gave the order, "Full speed ahead," and came about behind the "blimp."

Leaping forward the "Grigsby" gave chase, the "blimp" at the same time moving up directly over the intended prey.

At the drop of the flag above, Darrin let go his right hand, the signalman transmitted the order, and the bomb rolled overboard.

As Dave's hand fell the watch officer advanced the lever of the engine-room telegraph. An extra jump was put into the speed.

Again a column of water rose astern, but this time there was only the normal explosion of the depth bomb.

"Good hit," said the dirigible, by radio, and the message was called up to the bridge. "Saw her stagger. She's done for."

The "blimp" veered off once more, going back over her late course. As the "Grigsby" went about Darrin made out the tell-tale spread of oil on the waves.

"This is the real form of hunting," he exclaimed.

"Too bad, sir, that none of us thought of it before," remarked Ensign Andrews.

"We had to wait and learn," Dave explained. "That's the way that all progress in this war has

been registered. We are fighting an ingenious enemy. Destroying the submarine mine-carriers, as we are doing today, won't end the planting of German mines. As soon as the enemy finds out how we are checkmating him he'll invent another scheme, which we'll have to discover before we can beat it."

Half an hour later the British aircraft located a third submarine.

"A big one, too," she signalled. "Following the same course."

"Mr. 'Blimp' might try a bomb himself," suggested Ensign Andrews. "I believe he carries a few."

"Not as powerful ones as we carry," Darrin answered. "Besides, he has to be at a greater altitude, when hunting submarines, than it's handy to drop a bomb from. There is too much margin of chance that the enemy craft will graze by when the bomb is dropped from the air. In our case, if we drop when directly over the Hun, there can hardly be a miss, and it's the dirigible's business to tell us when we are directly over the enemy."

In the meantime, on board the destroyer, all was made ready, and Dave followed the same tactics as before. This time, too, there was a normal explosion, though a solid hit was made and the submarine destroyed. Apart from the "blimp's" report there could be no doubt as to the

destruction. The spread of oil on the surface of the sea told the story.

"If you and we hurry, we may bag another before dark," Dave sent by wireless, as the aircraft started back again.

"We'll do our best, believe us!" came back the word.

In the late afternoon a slight haze came up, which gradually deepened.

Darrin followed for a few miles, keeping the "blimp" in sight. She was some six miles away when a radio message came from her in code in these words:

"Can you see steamship about four knots northwest of us?"

Dave challenged the lookout on the military mask, but that seaman reported the weather a bit too thick to enable him to make out the steamship. Darrin accordingly wirelessed back this information.

"Looks like a tramp steamer," came the next message, "but she acted suspiciously when she sighted us. Her skipper appears perturbed, which he would hardly be if his business is honest. Weather is thickening so we may lose him in the haze. Better close in."

"Will do so," Dave replied.

Then followed explicit directions as to the course the destroyer must follow.

The next code message from the airship was:

"Skipper of steamship so bothered that he appears to be rigging anti-aircraft gun. Am about to signal him to stop for search."

Despite the haze over the sea the "blimp's" movements could still be made out from the deck of the destroyer. Mast lookouts and those on bridge and deck followed the "blimp's" movements with keen interest.

"He maneuvers as if he were closing in on the steamship," declared Ensign Andrews.

"If the steamer's skipper uses anti-aircraft guns the dirigible's commander will be justified in dropping bombs," Dave returned. "It's a stupid piece of business for any lightly armed steamer to attempt to resist a 'blimp.' But of course the steamer's skipper does not know that there is a warship so close."

"The rascal's firing on us," reported the "blimp."

"If you'll keep back we'll close in and talk to the stranger," Darrin suggested, by wireless.

"We're hit," almost instantly came the report from the airship.

"Badly?" Dave asked by radio.

"Investigating. Report soon."

"That ship must be up to something extremely desperate to dare to fire on a British 'blimp'!" exclaimed Dave Darrin. "But we're getting close, and soon ought to know what we have to tackle!"

CHAPTER XVIII

STRIKING A REAL SURPRISE

"ARE we heading straight course?" was Dave's next question through the air.

"You're going straight," came the cheering information.

"Found out your hurt?"

"Yes; gas-bag intact, and we've withdrawn out of easy range. One motor damaged more than we can repair in air. Can limp home, however."

"Leave the steamship to me," Darrin wirelessed back.

Inside of another minute and a half, Darrin made out the mast-tops of the stranger sticking up from the fringe of haze as the cloudy, reddish curtain shifted.

If Dave had sighted his intended prey, so had the stranger caught sight of the destroyer. The steamship cut a wide circle and turned tail.

"He's going at nineteen knots, we judge," came the radio report from the "blimp."

"That won't do him any good!" was the laconic answer that Darrin returned, this time in plain English instead of code.

The lower masts, the stack and then the hull of the stranger became visible as Darrin gained on him.

Bang! A shell struck the water ahead of the stranger, the war-ship's world-wide signal to halt.

Instead, the stranger appeared to be trying to crowd on more speed.

"Give him one in the stern-post," Darrin ordered.

The shell fell just a few feet short. The third one landed on the after-part of the stranger's deck-house.

And now there went fluttering up the top of the destroyer's mast the international code signal: "Stop or we'll sink you!"

It took another shell, this one crashing through the stern of the stranger, to convince her skipper that the destroyer was in deadly earnest.

By this time the "Grigsby" was a bare half-mile away, and going fast.

"We're bringing to bear on you to blow you out of the water," Darrin signalled this time. "Will you stop?"

If he had made any plan to die fighting the fleeing skipper must have lost his nerve at that point, for he suddenly swung his bow around, reduced speed and moved ahead at mere steerage-way.

"Call Ensign Peters to clear away a launch with

an armed crew," Darrin directed. "I will accompany him, for I must see what reason that craft had for firing on a British dirigible."

On either bow of the strange steamship was painted the national flag of the same neutral nation to which the "Olga" had appeared to belong. She flew no bunting.

"Stand by to receive boarding party," a signalman on the "Grigsby's" bridge wigwagged as the launch started toward the water.

The two craft lay now not more than five hundred yards apart. Across the water sped the fast power launch and came up alongside of the unknown steamship, which displayed no name.

Not a human being was now visible on her deck. An undersized watch officer had appeared on the bridge, but he now vanished.

"Who commands that destroyer?" demanded a voice in English, though it had the broken accent of a German-born speaker.

"I do," Darrin replied.

"Then stay where you are, for you're covered!" ordered the same voice in a frenzied tone. "We're not going to have you aboard. Signal the destroyer to make off at top speed and we'll leave you when she is out of sight. Refuse, and we kill you at once. Refuse, and you lose your life."

"Lower your gangway, and stop your nonsense," Dave ordered, angrily. "You're dealing with the

United States Navy, and your orders cannot control our conduct."

"Then you are a dead man, at once!" declared the voice of the unseen speaker.

Unnoticed by others, Darrin had given a hand signal to a petty officer in the bow of the launch.

"If you do not lower your side gangway at once, we shall find our own means for boarding," Dave shouted, wrathfully. "Instantly, sir!"

Thereupon half a dozen heads appeared over a bulwark above. As many rifle muzzles were thrust over the edge of the bulwark and a prompt fire began.

Disdaining to draw his automatic Darrin stood up in the launch, the center of such a hail of bullets that his continued existence seemed incredible. Above the reports of the rifles could be heard the voice of Ensign Peters as he directed the swinging around of the launch.

R-r-r-r-rip! The launch's machine gun came swiftly into play. Bullets rattled against the iron sides of the ship.

Four of the six seamen on her deck were seen to fall back; the remaining two fled as fast as they could go.

Then the muzzle of the machine gun was swung, and a hundred little missiles were driven through the wheel-house.

At an unspoken signal the launch moved in un-

til a sailor in the bow could hurl upward an iron grappling hook. At the first cast it caught on at the top of the rail, while the machine gunners trained their weapon to "get" any one who endeavored to cast off the grapple.

"Up with you!" shouted Darrin. One after another half a dozen sailors raced up the rope, swinging over to the deck.

Dave followed next, then more seamen. All were armed and ready for instant work of the sternest kind.

Two sailors lay dead, rifles beside them. Pools of blood showed that at least two more wounded men had been there, but had fled. No one else belonging to the ship was in sight on deck.

"Boatswain's mate, take the bridge," ordered Dave, as more men came up on board. "Put two men in the wheel-house. Take command of the deck with such men as I do not take with me."

Calling half a dozen seamen, and ordering them to draw their automatic revolvers, Darrin proceeded to the chart-room. He tried the door, but found it locked.

"Break it down," he ordered, and in a jiffy the thing had been done. But the chart-room proved to be empty.

Further aft Darrin went along the deck-house. The cabins of the captain and two mates were found to be empty.

"We'll soon know where the crew have gone to," he remarked.

In the dining-room were found three men in dingy blue uniforms, who appeared to be ship's officers. The oldest, who scowled hardest at the same time, Dave took to be the skipper.

"You command this ship?" Darrin inquired.

"If you say so," replied the man addressed.

"You must, for you are the fellow who ordered me to send my ship away," Darrin smiled grimly. "Are you a German?"

"None of your business. Why have you killed two of our crew and hurt others?"

"Drop that nonsense," Darrin retorted, sternly. "You know why we fired on you. And your men slightly wounded two of mine."

"We had a right to," scowled the other.

"You'll know better, by the time you've reached a British prison," Dave rejoined. "Men, place these three fellows under arrest. Search them."

Only the man who appeared to be the craft's master resisted being searched. He swung at one of the sailors, but Darrin jumped in, knocking him down and holding him to the floor.

"Put irons on this scoundrel," he ordered, sharply, a command so quickly obeyed that almost instantly the defiant one found himself manacled. Then Dave yanked the fellow to his feet.

"You are a bully," growled the prisoner.

"I am," mocked Dave, "when I have fellows of your stripe to handle. Men, you'd better iron that pair, too. They belong to the same outfit."

None of the three proved to have any arms on his person.

"Now, where are the members of your crew?" Dave demanded of the manacled skipper.

"Find them!" came the surly retort.

"In what business is this ship engaged?"

"Find out!"

"Bring these prisoners out on deck," Darrin commanded. Then, as the order was obeyed, Darrin made his way to the bridge.

"Boatswain's mate, pipe all hands on deck," he directed.

Shrilly the whistle sounded at the lips of the petty officer. But no men came to answer.

"We'll try other tactics, then," Darrin smiled.

Stepping to the wheel-house door he pulled it open. Inside was evidence of the havoc that the machine gun fire had worked there. Everything had been riddled, including the helmsman, who lay dead on the floor.

At this moment, however, Dave had no time to do more than glance at the dead man. Reaching for the whistle he blew a long blast, and caused the fire bell to be rung, the signal to stand by to abandon ship.

That brought seamen and stokers trooping to

the deck, until more than thirty had so appeared.

"Does any man among you understand English?" Darrin called down as he leaned over the rail in front of the wheel-house.

"I do," came from one of the crew.

"Then inform your mates that this craft has been seized as lawful prize of the United States Navy. Where is your boatswain?"

"That's me," said the same speaker, gruffly.

"Very good. Deliver my message to the crew. Then make sure that all hands are on deck. If you deceive me you will be held sternly to account for trickery."

"All here," reported the boatswain, after a quick count, "except the cook and his helpers."

"Send for them, and tell them to report here at once."

When the ship's force had been summoned, save for the two sailors known to be dead on the starboard side of the ship, Darrin continued:

"There were some wounded men."

"Two," said the boatswain.

"Where are they?"

"Below. One is badly hurt. The other is binding his wounds."

Dave had by this time walked down on to the deck. There was a forecastle large enough to hold the crew, and he ordered all of the men into it, except the boatswain, whom he sent with three of

his own men to find the wounded. These latter two were brought to the captain's cabin. The two dead seamen, after Darrin had gained their names from the boatswain, were picked up and thrown overboard into the sea. The boatswain was then sent to join the prisoners.

"Four of you men come with me, and we'll search the rest of the cabin part of the ship," Darrin directed.

Off the dining room were four doors that Dave believed opened into sleeping cabins. The first door that Darrin tried proved to be locked. One of his men carried a sledge-hammer that had been found in the wheel-house.

"Batter down the door!" Dave ordered.

Ere this order could be carried out the door flew open. A tall young woman, barely more than twenty years of age, stood in the doorway, her head thrown back, cheeks flushed, her look proud and disdainful. In her right hand she held a revolver.

"Go away from here!" she ordered. "Else I shall kill you!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE GOOD WORK GOES ON

"YOU will have to lower that pistol, young lady," warned Dave, calmly, as he walked toward her. The sailors had drawn back to either side of the doorway, but the young woman stood where she could aim at anyone in the American party.

The seaman nearest the revolver glanced quickly at Darrin, as if to inquire whether he should make an attempt to seize her pistol wrist and wrench the weapon away.

But Dave ignored the man's glance as he stepped up, eyeing the young woman coolly.

"Lower the pistol," he warned, again. "If you tried to use it, it would tell against you hard, before an English court, and these are wartimes, you know."

He was now within two feet of the weapon, which was pointed at his head.

"I shall kill you if you try to come near me," the young woman insisted desperately.

But Dave took another step. She pulled the trigger. There was a bright flash, a loud report.

"Lower that pistol!"

Dave, however, had been watching that trigger finger. As he saw it stiffen he dropped suddenly almost to his knees, the bullet passing over his head and embedding itself in woodwork across the cabin.

Darrin sprang up unharmed. His cap had caught a powder burn; that was all. He gripped the woman's wrist in a hand of steel. With his other hand he coolly took the pistol away from her, then dropped her wrist.

Bursting into a fit of hysterical weeping the woman drew back, endeavoring to close the cabin door. But Darrin's foot across the sill defeated her purpose.

"You are a brute!" she panted, frantically trying to close the door.

"At least," he assured her, "I have saved you from a crime that would have cost you your own life. Look out, please, for I am going to throw your door wide open."

"You — you coward!" she panted, and struggled to close the door.

"Stand back! I am sorry to have to use force, but you compel it."

As she refused to give ground Darrin gave the door a push that forced her back, crowding her against a berth. Then he stepped into the little cabin.

In a lower berth lay a middle-aged woman

whose piercing black eyes snapped as she surveyed the young naval officer.

"You are a wretch, to intrude here!" cried the older woman.

"One must often do disagreeable things in the line of war duty," Darrin answered, gravely. "For one thing, I must place you both in arrest. Then I shall be obliged to have your cabin searched."

"Oh, if I but had a weapon!" cried the older woman.

"If you had, and were quick enough," Dave assured her, "you might succeed in killing me, but that would not affect our duty here, for there are other officers at hand. Madam, I perceive that you are fully dressed, so I must ask you to rise and leave this cabin, for a few minutes, at least."

"I shall not do it," she snapped.

"Then you will oblige me to call my men in, and they will remove you, using no unnecessary violence, you may be sure, yet employing force just the same."

"You coward!"

The younger woman, too, started in to berate him, but Dave remained calm.

"Will you, at least, not leave the room until I have risen?" demanded the older woman.

Darrin, who had a notion that the women wanted to conceal or destroy something, nodded his assent, but signed to two of the seamen to

enter. Under his instructions they took the door off its hinges, carried it outside and laid it on the floor of the dining cabin.

"Now, ladies," Dave called, as he stepped outside, "you will be good enough to come out at once."

"We will come at our good convenience!" snapped the older woman.

"Wrong again. As I am discharging my duty here, you will necessarily come out at once. I shall not be patient if my instructions are defied."

Plainly furious that the door could not be closed, the younger woman assisted the older one to rise from the berth. Then, both expressing their resentment in their glances, the two women came out of the cabin.

"Mother and daughter," guessed Dave.

"Where will you have us sit, Brute?" demanded the younger woman.

"Take any seat in this dining cabin that you please," he replied. "You must sit together, and one of my men will stand before you."

Seats having been taken by the women, Darrin, calling one of the sailors to him, entered the little cabin. The only baggage there, beyond a hand satchel, appeared to be a locked steamer trunk under the lower berth.

"Take that outside," Dave directed. "It need not be investigated until we reach port."

Two dressing sacks and a few toilet articles were all the personal belongings that could be found there, though Darrin did not stop until he and the seaman had inspected pillows, mattresses and all other places that might have concealed papers or other little belongings.

Coming outside after some minutes Darrin asked:

"Ladies, do you wish to remain in the dining room, or will you go back to your sleeping cabin?"

"We will remain here for the present," replied the older woman. "If we wish to return to our own cabin later on we will do so."

"Wrong again," Dave informed her. "You must remain in one place. There can be no roaming about. This seaman who is your guard will see that you remain where you are for the present. I cannot permit you to leave this part of the dining room. Ladies, I regret being obliged to be so disagreeable, but I beg to assure you that your rights will be respected, and that you shall come to no harm if you obey instructions."

Then he looked into the other three cabins, but found them empty. With that Darrin left the dining room, after detailing another seaman to remain on duty there with the guard over the two women.

Darrin's next care was to inspect the holds. Here he found a cargo that appeared to consist

of hundreds of cases of dried fish. At random he selected one of the cases, had it carried to the deck, and ordered that it be opened. Its contents proved to be dried fish.

"There is something worse than that on board, or the skipper would not have acted so much like a lunatic," Dave told himself.

Next inspecting the engine room and stoke hole he found these departments in order, though the fires under the boilers would soon need attention.

Going above, Dave called the stokers and engineers out from among the prisoners, told them that he intended to send them to their posts, and asked them if they would pledge themselves to obey all orders and bridge signals, and not attempt any treachery.

This promise was quickly given.

"I hope you will all keep your word," Dave added, firmly, "for, if any of you attempts treachery, he will be shot down where he stands. I shall post guards."

He posted two of his men in the engine-room, and four in the stoke-hole.

"Be vigilant, and don't stand any nonsense," he ordered.

Returning to deck he gave his final orders to Ensign Peters, who had come on board and relieved the boatswain's mate.

"We are going to take this ship through to our

base port," he informed the ensign. "You will command, and will use the petty officers as you need them. I shall require but three of the launch crew to take me back to the 'Grigsby.' You have sufficient force here, Mr. Peters, but we shall stand by and so be ready to give any assistance you may need. Keep yourself informed as to the comfort and conduct of the women prisoners in the dining cabin, and do not permit them to be annoyed by your men. They must have no chance, though, to destroy or conceal any papers they may have on their persons."

With that Darrin went over the side. The launch took him back to his own craft.

Overhead the "blimp" moved slowly about. While her commander was sure he could reach England safely he preferred to remain in company that could rescue his crew and himself if it became necessary.

"Who can the women be?" Lieutenant Fernald wondered, when he had heard Dave's account of the visit to the steamship.

"I don't know. But their conduct, like the skipper's, is the main cause of their predicament. Had they behaved naturally I would have guessed them to be passengers from a neutral port to England. All I can say is that, though they speak English well, I am sure that they are not Englishwomen."

"The younger woman is a beauty, you say?"

"Yes, and her mother, if the older woman be such, is not at all unprepossessing."

The two ships and their aerial companion were now headed toward Darrin's base port, traveling at a good rate of speed.

It was well along in the evening when they passed the "Reed." In code Dalzell exultantly reported that an unusually large number of mines had been swept and removed from the water, and that two submarines had been located on the middle shoal and destroyed.

"Good work!" Dave wirelessed back.

Late that night, the "blimp" still leading the way, the destroyer and her prize entered the base port.

As soon as they had come to anchor Darrin communicated with the British flag-ship. Officials promptly went aboard the steamer to attend to the removal to a prison on shore of the officers and crew of the steamship, and of the women passengers as well.

Immediately after that the ship was subjected to a systematic search by seamen and longshoremen acting under the direction of British naval officers.

A name-plate, ready to fit to the front of the wheel-house, was found. The craft proved to be the "Louisa," well known in a certain British port

at which she had been accustomed to call with cargoes of dried fish. The fish now on board was taken off rapidly into lighters. And then it was that, in a sub-hold under the cargo deck, a more significant cargo was found.

From that sub-hold were removed nearly six hundred floating mines of the commonest German pattern. All had been packed with extreme care, and all were ready for transferring to German submarine mine-layers at sea.

It was after two in the morning when Captain Allaire, an officer of the British military intelligence department, came on board the "Grigsby," requesting that her commander be called. Dave received Captain Allaire in the chart-room. Allaire had come to seek information as to the speech and conduct of the two women at the time of their arrest.

Dave answered these questions carefully, then added:

"I shall be glad, indeed, if I brought in women prisoners of real importance along with the other prisoners."

"There are very few pairs whom we would rather have in our prisons," answered Captain Allaire. "The older woman is the notorious Sophia Weiner; the younger is her daughter, Anna Weiner. They use various other names, though. Every intelligence and secret service officer in

Great Britain knows of their exploits, and is ever on the lookout for them."

"Then I am astonished that they should have embarked on a steamship bound for England," Dave returned. "They must have faced certain arrest on landing."

"I don't believe they intended coming to England," Allaire answered. "Probably they were on their way to Spain. It may have been that no German submarine was leaving for the Spanish coast just at the time, and it was imperative that they reach Spain early. So, I take it, they journeyed to the neutral country and embarked on the 'Louisa,' knowing that the skipper could transfer them to a submarine bound for Spain. We are amazed at this fellow, Hadkor, skipper of the 'Louisa.' We had believed him to be all right, and he had ready access to our ports with his cargoes. But his ship has been found to be fitted with all facilities for transferring mines at sea, and also with an anti-aircraft gun and a stock of rifles and ammunition. The work must have been excellently paid for by the Germans, for the crew were assuredly in the secret, and ready even to fight, and they surely had to be paid for their risks."

"Then it was a very important catch that the 'blimp' ran us into."

"One of the best in a six-month," replied Cap-

tain Allaire. "And yet that skipper fellow and his crew must be lunatics, for their conduct lays them liable to being hanged as pirates."

When the "Grigsby" put out to sea before daylight Dave Darrin lay asleep. He slept extremely well, too, in the consciousness of a day's duties well done.

CHAPTER XX

DARRIN TURNS THE TABLES

BOTH commanding officers were asleep when the "Grigsby" and the "Reed" passed each other that morning, the "Grigsby" proceeding on to her station.

Dave would have gone back on the same water route he had hunted over the day before, but the dirigible, which had reached England safely, had not yet been put in shape for further service, and there was at present no other dirigible that could be spared for his service.

Therefore it was a matter of back to the shoals for temporary duty, yet of a kind that was very important.

At ten o'clock he was called, as that was the hour he had named for relieving Lieutenant Fernald.

The executive officer had come into the chart-room to call him, and remained while Darrin performed his hasty toilet.

"What's the weather?" Darrin asked.

"Misty, sir," replied the executive officer. "There's a fine drizzle, mixed with some fog. For

the last half hour it has been impossible to see more than six hundred yards. That is why we are running at half speed. We're close to the middle shoal and I was afraid we'd run down one of our own mine-sweepers."

"The kind of weather every ship's master dreads," Dave remarked.

"Yes, sir, and the weather bites you through to the marrow. The temperature isn't very low, but I think you'll find yourself more comfortable if you dress warmly. I found it so cold as to be necessary to wear the sheepskin under my heaviest rain-coat."

In finishing his dressing Darrin bore this suggestion in mind. In a few minutes he stepped out on deck. The weather proved to be as unpleasant as Fernald had asserted, and Dave was glad that he was warmly clad, for the wind, though not strong, was piercing.

"Sighted any mine-sweeper on the shoal?" Dave asked of Ensign Ormsby, the watch officer, as soon as he reached the deck.

"Only on the first shoal, which is in the 'Reed's' station, sir," Mr. Ormsby replied. "Those belonging to our station must be farther north. And we've sighted none out in deeper water. We couldn't in this thick weather, anyway."

"The view is so limited that this doesn't look like a promising day for us," Dave mused aloud, as

he gazed around at as much of the water as he could see.

"It really doesn't, sir."

"Better reduce to one-quarter speed. The less speed the less chance there will be of the enemy hearing us."

Accordingly the "Grigsby" rolled along slowly, the splash and ripple of the water along her sides being a soothing accompaniment.

For an hour they proceeded thus, without sighting a ship. They had passed the middle shoal, and were somewhat north of it when the two officers on the bridge observed that the sun was struggling feebly through the clouds and mist. A minute later, as if by magic, it burst out brightly, and the mist began to fade away.

"By Jove, sir, look at that!" almost whispered Ensign Ormsby.

Some seven hundred yards away from them, motionless on the water, her deck fully exposed, lay a submarine.

Neither deck gun was above decks. At least a dozen of the crew stood near the conning tower, and, of all things in the world, fishing.

"Quick work, there!" Dave called through the bridge telephone to the gunners forward. "Let number one gun send a shell over the craft. Don't hit her at the first shot. We'll capture that fellow, if possible!"

So quickly did the shot come that it was the first intimation the German seamen had of enemy presence.

From aloft the signal broke out:

"Don't try to fire a shot, or to turn, or we'll sink you!"

An officer's head popped up through the manhole of the conning tower, then almost as quickly was withdrawn.

As the "Grigsby," obeying her engines, leaped forward, the men behind both forward guns stood ready to fire at the word.

For the submarine crew to bring either gun into place would be the signal for the destroyer to open fire at a range constantly decreasing. Nor could the enemy craft employ her torpedo tubes without turning, which would have been instant signal for Darrin to order his gunners to fire on the submarine.

Through the manhole of the enemy craft leaped a signalman, flags in hand. Using the international code he wigwagged rapidly this message:

"We will make a grace of necessity and surrender."

"That doesn't necessarily mean that they do surrender," Dave 'phoned to the officer in charge of the forward gun division. "If the enemy makes a move to bring a gun into view, or to swing so

that a torpedo tube could be used, fire without order and fire to sink!"

The German commander evidently understood that this would be the course of the Yankees, for as the "Grigsby" bore down upon the submarine not a threatening move was visible.

Instead, the Hun crew, unarmed so far as the watchers on the destroyer could see, emerged from the conning tower and moved well up forward.

"Prepare to lower two boats," Dave called, and added instructions for a large crew for each launch. As the "Grigsby" came about and lay to, the launches were lowered. In the bow of each small craft was mounted a machine gun ready for instant action. The double prize crew was permitted to board the submarine without sign of opposition. At the command, German seamen began to file past two petty officers, submitting to search for hidden weapons, then passing on into the launches alongside.

Last of all four officers came through the manhole, preparatory to enduring the same search. When all the prisoners had been taken aboard, the launches started back to the "Grigsby."

Dave Darrin caught sight of the officers, as the launches approached the destroyer, and felt like rubbing his eyes.

"The ober-lieutenant and von Schelling!" he exclaimed with a start. "They haven't recog-

nized me yet. When they do that ober-lieutenant is going to wish that he had voted for going to the bottom of the sea!"

Not, indeed, until the officers came up over the side of the "Grigsby," and found Dave Darrin waiting on the deck, did the quartette of officers discover who their captor was.

"*You?*" gasped the ober-lieutenant! "Impossible!"

"Yes; you didn't expect to see me again, did you?"

"I — I — I thought you were ——"

The German checked himself.

"You thought you had sent me to the bottom of the sea," Dave went on. "It wasn't your fault that you didn't, but you missed your guess."

Dave then gave the order for housing the prisoners below.

"Are you sending the officers to the same place of detention that you are sending my men?" demanded the ober-lieutenant, a spark of assertiveness in his manner.

"Unfortunately, I am obliged to do so," Dave answered. "I am aware that German officers consider themselves to be of a brand of clay much superior to that used in making their men."

"But we officers are gentlemen!" retorted the ober-lieutenant, drawing himself up stiffly.

"It's a point that might be argued," returned

Darrin, lightly. "Yet there is no other course, for we have no detention space apart from the main one on board, so it is the only place that we can use for confining German officers — and gentlemen."

"May I request the privilege of a few words with you before you send me below?" requested the ober-lieutenant, unbending a trifle.

"Certainly," Dave assured him, and the guard that was marshaling the prisoners below permitted the recent German commander to step out of the line.

"I will see you in my chart-room," said Dave. Lieutenant Fernald, who had been standing by, caught Dave's signal and entered with his chief.

Once inside Ober-Lieutenant Dreiner turned and gazed at Fernald.

"I had expected a private interview, Herr Darrin," he said, rather stiffly.

"Lieutenant Fernald is my executive officer, and nothing goes on on board with which he is not familiar," Darrin replied. "Have a seat, Herr Ober-Lieutenant."

"And must I speak before — before your subordinate?" asked the German, as he dropped into the chair that had been indicated.

"If you speak at all," Darrin answered.

"But will Herr Fernald keep inviolate what I have to say?"

"In that," Darrin promised, "he will be governed by circumstances."

Dreiner hesitated for a few seconds before he began:

"I — I — er — I have to refer to an incident that followed our last words together on a former occasion."

"You mean, of course, the time, when you assembled on the deck of your craft four prisoners, of whom I was one, then closed your manhole and submerged, leaving us floundering in the water, and, as you expected, to die by drowning?"

"I have not admitted that any such thing took place," Herr Dreiner cried, hastily, with a side glance at Lieutenant Fernald.

"It will make no difference, Herr Dreiner, whether you admit or deny that inhuman attempt to murder four helpless prisoners," Dave rejoined. "It so happened that all four of us kept alive until rescued, and we are all four ready, at any time, to appear against you. So there is no use in evasion."

"Then you intend to bring the charge against me?" asked Dreiner, in a voice husky with either emotion or dread.

"I can make neither promises nor threats as to that," Darrin countered.

"The stern British military courts would sentence me to death on that charge."

"Probably," Dave agreed.

"And I have a very particular reason for wanting to live," Dreiner went on.

"Yes?"

"I have eight young children at home, and their sole dependence is on what I earn," the German continued. "I do not mind dying, for myself, but in that event what will become of my poor little children?"

"You Germans fill me with disgust!" Dave Darrin exclaimed, rising, as though to terminate the interview. "It seems to be a rule with you fellows, when you find yourselves facing death, to whine about the children you must leave behind to starve. Before you set out to murder me in an especially brutal manner, did you take the trouble to ask me whether *I* had any children who would starve? Did you ask Mr. and Mrs. Launce whether they had children that were not provided for? And what about that honest old sea-dog, Captain Kennor? Did you pause to inquire whether he was leaving hungry children behind? For that matter, have any of you wild beasts on German submarines ever worried yourselves about the families you orphaned by your inhuman crimes at sea? Even in the case of the 'Lusitania,' did *that* submarine commander ask himself, or any one else, what would happen to the women and children who were pitched into the sea? You are wild to murder innocent, harmless people be-

longing to an enemy nation, yet when you yourselves are brought face to face with death you are all alike. You whine! You beg! Dreiner, you are not man enough to play the game! Your appeal in the name of your eight children, who, for that matter, may not even exist, falls on deaf ears when you address me. I hope that you will be summoned before a British court and that you may be sentenced to pay the full penalty for your crimes!"

Dreiner's face went ashen-gray as he staggered to his feet. Probably he really was concerned for the fate of his children, but his was not the sort of record that invited pity.

"I will not detain you here," Dave finished coldly. "If I did, I might be tempted to abuse a prisoner, and that is something no American fighting man can really do. Orderly!"

As the orderly stepped in, saluting, Dreiner tried a last appeal:

"Why do you hate us Germans so?" he whined. "I know that you do not hate me especially, but that you hate all of our race!"

"Why do we hate you?" Darrin echoed. "The reason is that, from all we hear, fellows like yourself appear to be fair samples of the German officer, on land and afloat. If that does not answer your question fully, I can think of other reasons to give you. I would rather not, for it

brings me perilously close to the offense of abusing a prisoner, and that I do not wish to do. Orderly, call two men and instruct them to take Ober-Lieutenant Dreiner below to join the other prisoners."

As the German stepped past the Yankee commander he glared into Dave's face, hissing:

"To-day it is your chance to humiliate and condemn a German. It may not be long ere your turn comes, and a German officer tells you what your end is to be!"

"I am ever at Fate's orders," Darrin answered, with a bow.

CHAPTER XXI

ON A MISSION OF GREAT TRUST

WHEN the "Grigsby," in broad daylight, steamed into the base port with a captured submarine and her crew, and a German commanding officer who was liable for a dastardly crime at sea, there was great rejoicing both on the other naval vessels and on shore.

If the German prisoners expected a stormy reception when they were landed and placed under a guard of soldiers, they were disappointed, for nothing of the sort awaited them.

The British populace, though it turned out to see the captives marched through the streets, proved to be too good sportsmen to make a violent demonstration against their now helpless enemies.

Darrin had no sooner turned over the prize and made his report to the British admiral than he was ready for sea once more.

"Mr. Darrin," said the admiral, heartily, "when you went out the other day you promised to show me results. I take this opportunity to assure you that you have. You yourself have made some notable captures, and have destroyed some

enemies whom you could not capture. Mr. Dalzell's record has also been a splendid one. The plan by which you are catching mine-layers on or near the shoals before they start out on new mine-laying work is one that has enabled our mine-sweeping craft to accomplish more than they have hitherto been able to do. The record of mines discovered and swept out of the paths of navigation is a fine one, but you have done even better work in blocking the enemy so thoroughly in their operation of laying the mines in the first instance. Your successes are assuming extremely notable proportions. To-morrow the dirigible will be ready to start out again to aid in finding mine-cargo-carrying submarines bound for these waters."

"Sir," Dave replied, "I greatly appreciate your words of praise, and I can speak in the same vein for Mr. Dalzell. Now, as he has had no share in destroying the submarines that bring over cargoes of mines I intend to detail him for that work to-morrow."

"That fits in with my plans," nodded the admiral. "If you will put to sea and find the 'Reed,' and then return to this port, dropping anchor, but keeping up steam, I shall have for you, to-night or to-morrow, a special task of the greatest importance."

"Very good, sir. Is that all for the present?"

"Yes. Your further instructions will be given to you when the time comes."

"Very good, sir. Thank you."

Saluting, Darrin left the flagship, returning at once to the "Grigsby," which soon put to sea. The weather being now comparatively clear, Darrin raced away at nearly full speed. Not long afterward he overhauled and boarded the "Reed," informing Dalzell of his chance to go on the hunt for the submarine mine-carrying craft on the morrow.

"I had been wondering if I was to have a little share in that sport of kings," said Dan, with one of his grins.

"You prevaricator!" Darrin uttered, sternly. "When did I ever hog all of the best sport and leave you the rind?"

"Kamerad! Don't shoot!" begged Dan, with another grin.

"Kamerad" (comrade) is the word the German soldiers employ when offering to surrender to Allied troops. But "Kamerad" does not always mean as much as it conveys, for instances have been numerous when Germans have pretended so to surrender, then have whipped out hitherto hidden weapons and slain their captors.

Returning to port before dark, Darrin put in that night in catching up with his sleep. He slumbered almost without stirring, for it had been

long since he had enjoyed more than a part of his needed rest at sea.

Officers and men, too, made the most of their opportunity to sleep that night. Only one officer at a time kept deck watch, and only one engineer officer down below. The "Grigsby" was ready to put to sea almost on an instant's notice from the flagship, but no word came.

Fully refreshed, and in the best of condition, Dave Darrin enjoyed a famously good breakfast the next morning, as did every officer and man on the destroyer. Still the orders for special duty had not arrived, and Dave was beginning to chafe under the delay.

"If it were the first of April I might suspect the bluff old admiral were playing a joke on us," Dave confided to Lieutenant Fernald. "I might think this was his way of affording us all a chance to get even with our rest. I am wondering much what the special duty is to be."

"You will know, sir, in the same breath that you are ordered away to that duty," smiled the executive officer.

"Yes, this is war-time and advance information is very rare," Darrin admitted.

It was, in fact, nearly eleven o'clock when a man of the deck watch reported that a boat had put off from the flagship and was apparently heading for the "Grigsby."

"I'll go out to receive the visitor," said Fernald, rising and leaving the chart-room.

The boat was, indeed, heading for the destroyer. It soon came alongside, bringing a staff officer from the admiral. Lieutenant Fernald received the visitor, conducted him to the chart-room, presented the officer caller to Dave, then discreetly withdrew.

"The admiral's compliments, Mr. Darrin. He spoke to you yesterday of special duty of a most important nature. I have the honor to bear his final instructions."

"Then you are doubly welcome," smiled Dave, "for we have been chafing a bit, fearing that the admiral's plans might have been changed."

"There has been considerable activity on the part of German submarines in these waters of late," continued the British naval staff officer. "As a rule the Huns keep out of the channel, but they have been so active lately that we fear for the safety of the hospital ship 'Gloucester,' which is bringing home about two thousand wounded men. It was the admiral's plan to have you leave port, under full speed, an hour before the sailing time of the 'Gloucester' from France."

"Is there still time for us to get that hour's start?" asked Darrin, rising.

"Unfortunately, the orders were misunderstood, Mr. Darrin. The 'Gloucester' actually sailed

about an hour ago. You will find her exact course written on this paper, and you are directed by the admiral to reach her with all speed and convoy her ——"

"One moment, please!"

Darrin broke off the conversation long enough to telephone the executive officer, instructing him to transmit the needful orders to the engineer officer on duty, and to pipe all hands on deck.

"I am listening, sir," Darrin resumed, wheeling about.

"Outside you will find two of our fastest minesweepers," continued the staff officer. "They are to follow you as closely as possible, and, on nearing the 'Gloucester,' they are to turn and sweep the course ahead of the hospital ship, while you are to be extremely alert for submarines."

"I understand, sir," Darrin nodded. "Are there any further orders?"

"No, Mr. Darrin. Whatever else comes up must be left to your own discretion to handle. The admiral bade me state that he has the fullest confidence in your proven ability to handle circumstances as they arise."

"My thanks to the admiral for his good opinion, and to yourself for informing me of it," smiled Dave, still on his feet and moving slowly toward the door.

"I — er — have some further information, Mr.

Darrin, that will prove of considerable interest to you," resumed the naval staff officer, also moving toward the door.

"Yes?"

"It possesses a personal interest for you. There are, of course, nurses on board, and other Red Cross workers. One of them is Mrs. Darrin."

Dave's quick smile of happiness was reflected in the staff officer's ruddy face.

"So, you see, Mr. Darrin, you have more than a professional interest in meeting the hospital ship and bringing her through safely, for in doing so you will also be guarding your wife. It is rather an unusual stimulus to duty, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXII

THE RED CROSS TRAGEDY

"NO, sir!" said Dave, promptly. "I love my wife, and it will not surprise you to hear me say it, but in the discharge of my duty Mrs. Darrin has exactly the same status as a stranger. I shall be glad, for my own sake, to bring through in safety any ship on which she sails, but I shall be just as glad to be able to insure the safety of any wounded Tommy Atkins on the 'Gloucester' who is longing for a sight of his loved ones at home."

"By Jove, that's a bully attitude, and I know you mean it!" cried the staff officer, holding out his hand. "I must not delay you. Good-bye, Darrin, and the best of good luck to you!"

A moment later the British officer was over the side and being borne back to the flagship, while quick orders rang out on the "Grigsby." In as short a time as the thing could be done the anchor was stowed, and the destroyer was on her way out of port at half speed.

Just beyond the harbor Darrin gave the order for full speed ahead. From the bridge, three

miles farther out on the course, he made out the two mine-sweepers.

"All starts well," commented Dave to Lieutenant Fernald. "May all end as well! By the way, Mrs. Darrin is said to be on board the 'Gloucester'."

"Congratulations," said Fernald, heartily. "And you may look, sir, for every officer and man aboard this craft to redouble his efforts to make the day's task a complete success."

"I don't want it for that reason, although I expect from all on board the fullest efficiency. Fernald, I'm not running an American naval vessel primarily for the safety of my family."

For this trip the lookouts were trebled. They stood at every point of vantage from which anything on the sea might be sighted.

Mile after mile the "Grigsby" logged, plunging and dipping in the sea, her decks running water and spray dashing continuously over the bridge. It was wet work, and over all was the roaring racket of the ship's powerful machinery. To Darrin it was music; the dash and the sense of responsibility thrilled him.

At last came the anxiously awaited hail from the lookout aloft:

"Topmasts of a ship almost dead ahead, sir."

"Keep her constantly in sight, and as soon as you can make out the hull report whether she dis-

plays the hospital Red Cross," the watch officer called back.

"Aye, aye, sir."

To those on the bridge the mastheads were soon visible. After that came the lookout's hail:

"She's a hospital ship, sir. I can make out the Red Cross plainly through the glass."

"It must be the 'Gloucester,' then," remarked Lieutenant Fernald.

"Pass the word that the first man really to sight a periscope or a conning tower shall have a fortnight's shore leave extra," Dave ordered.

He smiled as he heard the scattering cheer that greeted that announcement.

"The real way to the sailorman's heart lies through extra shore leave," he told Fernald.

"I wouldn't mind winning that prize myself," muttered the executive officer. "That is, if I were sure that I could honestly accept the leave without prejudice to duty."

"Find the periscope, then," smiled Darrin. "I am sure I can win the promised reward, even for the executive officer."

Not long afterward they were in plain sight of the "Gloucester." On she came, the smoke pouring from her pair of funnels. A fast craft, the hospital ship was making about her best time in her hurry to get safely across with her precious human cargo.

Then the "Grigsby" swung far out to port, cut a part of a circle, and came back on the hospital ship's port bow, darting ahead again, cutting across the hospital ship's bow far ahead and to port, then turning and crossing once more.

After the two craft had proceeded some distance farther the two mine-sweepers were sighted well ahead. These craft would soon turn and sweep the waters for mines ahead of the hospital ship.

Not mere fancy capers was the "Grigsby" cutting. As she crossed the "Gloucester's" bows time and again her lookouts were able to keep sharp watch to port and starboard of the ship that bore a human cargo of pain and suffering. It was the only way for a solitary destroyer to keep effective watch on both sides of the ship she was convoying.

Twice Dave used his glass to glance along the nearer rail of the steamship in search of Belle Darrin. He did not find her thus, and did not try again, for he must not fail in his unceasing watch for the ship's safety.

The mine-sweepers signalled their message of greeting, then turned and swung into place. From this point the "Gloucester" and her escort slowed down speed to accommodate that of the smaller craft.

The vessel wearing the emblem of the Red

Cross had not yet reached the spot at which the sweepers had turned.

Over the sea came a sullen, significant roar. The "Gloucester" shivered from stem to stern. A wail of anguish went up in concert from the soldiers on board the hospital ship who were worst wounded.

It had come so suddenly that, for an instant, Dave Darrin was dazed.

"That wasn't a torpedo!" he cried, hoarsely, a second or two later.

"She hit a mine, sir," reported Lieutenant Fernald. "It wasn't the fault of the sweepers, either, for they hadn't time to get that far. But it's awful — awful! There'll be hundreds of the poor fellows drowned!"

Dave quickly recovered his presence of mind. As the "Gloucester" shut off speed Darrin turned and dashed at full speed to the aid of the stricken craft.

Even as the race of rescue began Darrin sent to the radio operator this message to send broadcast through the air:

"S. O. S.! Hospital ship 'Gloucester' has struck mine and must founder soon. Rush at best speed to give aid. S. O. S.!"

In the message Darrin included also the exact position of the stricken vessel.

Two launches were swung outward on the

davits. Darrin sprang down to the deck to personally select the men to man the launches. Into the launches were thrown several rolls of heavy canvas and rolls of cordage, as well as such tools as might be needed.

By the time that the "Grigsby" had shut off speed and lain to, the decks of the "Gloucester" were observed to be crowded with people.

The two launches, with Dave Darrin in one of them, shoved off and were quickly alongside the hospital ship. Two ship's ladders were let down over the side. Up these went the two boarding parties as rapidly as they could move. Lines came swirling down, and canvas rolls and other supplies were hoisted to the deck. This work was all quickly done.

Not a second must be lost. Dave ordered Ensign Peters and several men forward to the bow of the hospital ship. With the remainder, Dave, carrying a roll of canvas over one shoulder, and all hands carrying some burden, started to go below.

With a group of Red Cross nurses who stood silently and calmly by the patients who were being borne to the deck, Darrin was sure that he caught sight of Belle.

But he did not look a second time. There was too much to be done now when seconds were precious. Nor did Belle look up from the work

that she was doing among the wounded on stretchers.

A member of the crew led the American party below. Here Dave found two mates and a score of sailors already at work. They were trying to accomplish the very thing Darrin had come prepared to do — to rig canvas over the hole in the hull to shut out as much of the water as was possible.

If this could be accomplished, and if the "Gloucester's" pumps could drive out most of the water that got in past the canvas patch, then it might be possible for the hospital ship to keep afloat until other rescue craft could reach the scene.

"We'll take your orders, sir," spoke up one of the mates, saluting, as Dave and his party reached a forward hold where, despite the flimsy canvas patch already rigged, the water was almost waist-deep.

"We'll work together," returned Dave, briefly. "It may turn out that the ship can be kept afloat for an hour or two."

"The bulkheads were shut, sir," the mate explained, hurriedly, "but fragments of the mine entered this first water-tight compartment, and also the second. You'd better go down into the second compartment, too, sir."

Darrin hurried up to the deck, followed by the

mates and their men. The hole in the first compartment extended some six inches below water line and some two feet above. It was a long, jagged hole. Trying to descend into the second compartment with the chief mate, Darrin found that the hole here extended at least a foot below water line.

"It's going to be no use, sir," said the mate, sorrowfully. "I don't believe the ship can be kept afloat more than ten minutes before she goes down by the head. These are our two biggest compartments."

CHAPTER XXIII

A NOBLE FIGHT WITHOUT WEAPONS

NOR was the mate's warning a panicky one. There seemed not one chance in a hundred of closing the gaps sufficiently to keep the hospital ship afloat long enough to save many of its wounded passengers.

Dave had made his plans while coming alongside. By this time the repair material he had brought along lay on the deck. He called his own men to help him, and the chief officer sent two score more of British seamen to his aid.

The engine-room fires being as yet untouched by water, the pumps were working with tremendous force.

"Unroll that canvas, there. Run it out lively," Darrin ordered.

In a twinkling the first patch was ready. Dave himself helped with weighting what was intended for the lower edge of the patch, and with reeving in ropes at the sides and top.

"Over with it!"

Lowered down into place, the patch was fitted to the hole. It still had to be made fast.

Both port and starboard gangways had been lowered, and launches from the destroyer were alongside, receiving badly wounded men who had been taken over the side on stretchers. The "Grigsby's" cutters were also alongside, picking up such of the wounded men as could jump in life belts. The "Gloucester's" own boats swung out after being loaded. The mine-sweepers had come up and had lowered their boats and sent them to the rescue. Several hundred men and women were reasonably sure of being saved, but unless Darrin succeeded in what he was undertaking, from twelve to fifteen hundred other human beings were surely doomed.

Badly as boats were needed, Dave had to commandeer two of the smallest. Himself going in one of these, he superintended the making fast of the canvas patches below from the water. Seamen over the hull's side in slings, acting under the second mate, did valiant service at the same time.

With a single outside canvas patch over the forward hole, Darrin moved back to the second breach. Here, too, a patch was quickly put in place.

By this time the "Grigsby" and the mine-sweepers had received nearly as many rescued passengers as they could hold. The small boats were returning for more.

Up to Dave rushed Captain Senby of the "Gloucester."

"Captain," he called, addressing Dave Darrin by that courtesy title, "these Red Cross women ought to be saved while there's time, but they refuse to go over the side until their patients are safe."

"Did you expect they would desert their patients?" Darrin asked quietly, his gaze still on the work that he was directing.

"But, Captain, we must save the women folks, anyway! Won't you use your persuasion to help me?"

"No," came Dave's quick response. "These women are asserting their right to prove the stuff that is in them. In this war, in their own fields, the women fight as bravely as the men."

"In a time like this the women ought to be saved!" the British master insisted.

"Not at the expense of their best sense of duty," Darrin answered.

For an instant Senby regarded the young naval officer with amazement before he blurted:

"Captain, I don't believe you have any women folks of your own!"

"My wife is one of the Red Cross women on board," Darrin answered, quietly. Then, raising his voice, he added:

"That patch is ready! Over with it!"

Thus was the second patch fitted over the forward hole, and men were busy completing another for the second hole.

And now with the small boats filled, Darrin anxiously surveyed the sea. No ships were yet in sight.

"Get more patches ready!" he shouted.

He then descended to the first compartment, stepping down into the water to take its depth. He judged it to be of about the same depth as before.

Four patches were over each hole by the time that the first trail of smoke was observed far down on the horizon. A steamship was coming to their aid, but would it arrive in time?

Another inspection showed that the pumps had made a slight gain on the water. It was going out of the compartments faster than it could get in past the canvas. But Dave knew that ship pumps, working to furious capacity, were likely to give out at any moment.

He stationed a seaman with lead and line on the stairs leading down to each compartment, with instructions to take frequent soundings and to report sharply to the deck.

The "Gloucester's" rafts, too, were now overboard. On these huddled those of the wounded or convalescing soldiers who were better able to take care of themselves.

But not a single Red Cross woman had yet gone over the side. Much as some of the wounded might need attendance on the rescue craft or in the small boats, those left helpless behind needed the women of mercy still more!

A slow gain was still being made on the water in the two compartments. If the pumps held out, and if the patches did not give way, there might yet be a fair chance to save life. But Dave knew the dangers that confronted all hands left behind, even when he could make out the hull of the oncoming steamship, and saw that she was moving at fullest speed.

"We should win out, don't you think?" demanded Captain Senby, anxiously. "I've never lost a ship."

"At least we stand a fair chance to win out," Dave answered, frankly. "Any one of three or four things might happen to us yet and send us to the bottom."

Darrin spent most of his time inspecting the canvas patches. Between times he anxiously watched the relief ship. He could see, by glass, when she was four miles away, that her davits were swung out and her boat-crews in place.

"All depends on how we hold together for the next half or three-quarters of an hour," he told Captain Senby.

There were still some two hundred patients

who would have to be moved on stretchers. These were brought to the upper deck until the stretchers all but blocked passage.

What a cheer went up from those at the rail as the steamship, an Italian craft, lay to and began to lower her boats! The small boats from the hospital ship, the "Grigsby" and the minesweepers had already gone forward to meet her. As fast as they could move in to either side gangway these boats discharged their temporary passengers, then quickly returned to the "Gloucester."

For an hour all the small boats plied back and forth, the rescuers using all their nerve and muscle power in their efforts at speed.

Shivering, for he was drenched up to the waist, Dave stood by, receiving the reports of the leadsmen in the two compartments. The best work of the canvas patches had been done. They were slowly yielding to the fearful pressure of the water without and it was impossible to rig additional, fresh patches over them. The water was rising, inch by inch, in both compartments.

"How long do you think we can keep afloat?" asked Captain Senby, miserably.

"Your judgment will be as good as mine, sir," Dave answered. "It is impossible to name the number of moments we can hope to keep above water, but we both know it cannot be for long."

At last the decks were cleared of litters. There were no more to be brought out. The last boats had taken away many besides the stretcher patients.

"Give us ten minutes more," said Darrin, as he watched the boats discharging at the Italian steamer, and returning, "and we shall all be safe."

"They will be the longest, most anxious ten minutes that I ever lived!" sighed Captain Senby.

"Man, you're white and you look ill," Dave cried. "Buck up! You've done splendidly, and the discipline on board has been perfect. You have nothing with which to reproach yourself."

"Do you really think so?' Senby asked, with a wan smile. "I thank you, but it seems to me I should have done better."

"You could do better than you're doing now, for you've lost your nerve," Darrin warned him, in a low voice. "Yet while you needed your nerve you kept it."

"You won't mind saying that in your report, will you?" asked the master, eagerly. "I'd hate to have my family hear anything that would make them feel I had broken down."

"The discipline on this ship shows what you have done," Dave rejoined. "You're suffering, now, on account of the people who may be lost, and you're thinking of the Red Cross women who are stubborn enough to do their duty like men.

But you've trained your crew well, you have the respect of your officers and men, and you've given all help possible in the shortest amount of time. A ship's master can be judged, instantly, by the discipline that prevails on his craft. Your family will hear nothing about your conduct that won't please 'em."

At this the British master "bucked up" wonderfully, but he still watched the Red Cross women with wistful eyes.

"Here are the first boats coming back to take the last of us off," Darrin said encouragingly. "Now, clear all hands off lively."

"The women first?" almost pleaded Captain Senby.

"Of course!" Dave nodded. "They've done their full duty, and done it splendidly. Now, insist."

Galvanized into action by these cheering words, Captain Senby cleared his throat, then roared in a fog-horn voice:

"All hands stand by to abandon ship! Be lively, please, ladies. No man stir over the side until the last woman has gone over!"

Some of the Red Cross women smilingly obeyed the order; others hung back.

"There are still some wounded men on board," pleaded one of them. "Let the last wounded man go over the side, then we'll go."

"I'll kill any man on this deck who tries to go

over until the last woman is taken care of!" shouted Senby, drawing a revolver.

Some of the nurses still demurred, but the master was obdurate.

"Ladies," he called out, "this craft can't keep afloat much longer. Those of you who hang back keep the men from their last chance to get away. I tell you, and I mean it, that no man stirs over the side until the last woman is on her way to a boat. Don't hold us all back, ladies!"

That swept aside the last reluctance of the nurses. They trooped forward, to one side gangway or the other, and were quickly on their way into the waiting boats.

One of them, however, drew back, then smiled and crossed the deck.

"I shall remain with you, Dave," announced a clear, firm voice, and Dave turned to find Belle's steady hand resting on his arm.

"Are you going over the side, madam?" inquired Captain Senby, pleadingly.

"You must make an exception in my case, sir," Belle Darrin answered smilingly. "I can hardly be expected to leave my husband at a time like this."

"Oh!" gasped the Briton, understandingly. "Madam, you make me anxious, but your devotion makes me proud of your sex!"

"Men, now!" shouted the Briton when he saw

the last skirt flutter at the top of a companion-way.

"Now, you'll go over the side, sir, won't you?" asked the master, anxiously, as two orderly files of men stepped to the sides.

"As the two commanders here," Dave answered, easily, "I believe that tradition requires you and me to go over last of all, Captain Senby."

"But your wife, sir——"

"Is an American, Captain, who has taken the oath of service to her country's flag just as you and I have done."

"But, madam, you——" began the Briton, turning to Belle.

"My husband has spoken, sir," smiled Belle. "Surely, Captain Senby, you do not believe in mutiny."

The soldier patients who had remained behind when the nurses went over the side were all men who could walk without assistance. These were now going over, too. While this was going on the chief mate and the boatswain had mustered the last of the crew and the roll had been called. All were on hand who were not in the small boats.

After the soldiers and the hospital men had gone down into boats, and other small craft had moved in to replace them, the crew went over, the chief mate being the last to go except the trio who stood in the middle of the upper deck.

"There's a boat left with room for all of you!" the mate called, lifting his hat.

With a last swift look around at the ship he had loved, the Briton almost reluctantly followed the Darrins. His legs trembled under him a bit as he descended the steps of the side companionway, but it was from neither exhaustion nor fear.

Last of all the Briton took his seat in the row-boat. He tried to clear his throat and give the order, but could not speak.

"Shove off!" called Dave to the boat-tenders, as he faced the men sitting with their oars out. "Give way! One, two, one two!"

The boat belonged to one of the mine-sweepers. With true British precision and rhythm the men pulled away. Darrin ceased counting and turned to his smiling wife.

"Not such a bad time, was it?" he asked.

"As it turned out, no. But I was afraid, Dave. Had a few hundred of the brave fellows been drowned, the horror would not have left me as long as I lived."

"Then you must steel your nerves a bit, Belle, dear. War, at the least, is a grewsome thing, but this war contains more horrors than any other war of which man has knowledge. The vast numbers engaged make it certain that the losses will be heavy, and heavier, until the struggle is over. If you work up near the front, within range of

the big guns, you will necessarily have to become accustomed to seeing the visible evidence of huge losses daily."

"I shall grow to it," Belle Darrin declared, confidently.

And now Captain Senby was speaking to him.

"It's a great load off my mind, Captain Darrin. I was the merchant marine master of the 'Gloucester,' but she was taken and refitted so quickly that we were sent to sea without change of status. On our return from this voyage the mates and I had orders to take examination for commissions in the naval reserves. Then we were to continue aboard the 'Gloucester.' But she will be at the bottom in an hour and my chances of making the naval reserves will go down with her."

"I don't see why," Dave returned, heartily. "You and your mates are no less capable than you were."

Then, in an undertone that reached only Senby's ear, Darrin added:

"Man, you've been a bit unstrung, but you've gotten away without the loss of a life. Bring your nerve back from this moment! Don't let it spoil your life or your career. Pull yourself together and smile. Smile! Don't let any one see that you've a single doubt of yourself! Smile, and go up for your examination to-morrow. All that ails

you is that you worry for the safety of others — a most commendable fault in a skipper!"

From that instant Captain Senby gave at least a very good imitation of a man who was modestly satisfied with his achievement, though he realized that he owed most of the success of the last two hours to Lieutenant Commander Dave Darrin, U. S. N.

Arriving at the Italian vessel, Darrin transferred Belle and himself to a launch from the "Grigsby" and promptly rejoined his craft.

Taking Belle to his own seldom-occupied quarters on the destroyer, Dave left her there, and then went to the bridge and signalled his orders to the mine-sweepers and to the Italian steamship.

The mine-sweepers were ordered to move in advance of the rescue vessel to sweep any hidden mine from her path.

"And you, Mr. Fernald, will cross the course continually ahead of the steamship and keep the most vigilant guard against submarine attack!"

Dave next went to the chart-room, his teeth chattering from his soaked, chilled condition.

Here he stripped and gave himself as vigorous a rub-down as he could administer, after which he attired himself in dry clothing throughout and sent orders to the mess kitchen for a pot of hot coffee.

Over this warmer Dave lingered long enough to gulp down three cups of the steaming beverage.

Then pulling on a dry sheepskin coat and turning up the fur collar against the wintry blast, he went to the bridge.

"All's secure, and no sign of trouble so far, sir," reported Lieutenant Fernald.

Yet, unknown to any on the destroyer, the "Grigsby," driving ahead obliquely from port to starboard well ahead of the steamship, was heading straight toward a mine that lurked beneath the surface of the water.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

"SHALL I order the helm to starboard, sir?" asked Ensign Ormsby. "We're due to sail too close to that mine-sweeper."

Though the two craft were separated by several hundreds of yards, Darrin's quick, trained eye took in the fact that the mine-sweeper, by the time the "Grigsby" crossed her course, would be a safe distance ahead.

"No," he decided; "keep to the course and she'll clear us."

Ensign Ormsby nodded and remained silent. Neither could know of the hidden mine that lay in her path.

Yet less than half a minute later a signalman raced to the stern of the mine sweeper, wigwagging frantically this message:

"Hard a-starboard! We have just picked up a mine!"

The little craft had slowed down; she was maneuvering around that mine to get hold and land it on her deck.

Ormsby read the signal with his chief. Not

even waiting, now, for Darrin's word, the watch officer changed the course.

Right in the course that they had been going the mine-sweeper now blocked the way. Had her sweep been thirty feet either side she would have gone on past and the destroyer would have struck the mine.

As the "Grigsby" went astern and to starboard of the little craft, then turned and darted portwise across her bows on a new oblique, officers and men on the destroyer saw the British crew hoisting from the water the mine that would have destroyed one of the latest prides of Uncle Sam's big war fleet.

It was all over, so far as that mine was concerned, and for a moment or two Darrin found himself shaking from a chill that had not been caused by his recent soaking.

The thought of other probable dangers ahead caused him to steel himself once more. To his subordinate officers he presented the confident, smiling face to which they were accustomed.

Several craft of the British Navy and two other American war vessels had received his S. O. S. radio message and had started on their way. But all would have been too late, for some ten minutes after the rescuing fleet started for England the "Gloucester" had lowered her nose under the water. Soon after there was a violent explo-

sion as the sea water reached glowing furnace fires and the boilers, and the hospital ship went down, another victim of inhumane warfare that respects not even the rights of the wounded and sick.

Dave Darrin did not leave the bridge until he had seen his little fleet enter the base port.

Then, pausing for only a word with Belle, he ordered a launch lowered and went direct to the British admiral, reporting his work for the afternoon in greater detail, for he had already sent in the main facts in a radio code message.

"You have done magnificently, Mr. Darrin," exclaimed the admiral. "It was a wonderful performance to keep the 'Gloucester' afloat under such conditions until every human being on board had been transferred to safety."

"That was made possible largely by the nature of the holes in the ship's hull, sir. I cannot say positively, but from my examination of the holes I believe that the mine that the 'Gloucester' struck was not moored as securely to her anchoring device as is usually the case. It was not the bow of the hospital ship, but the side of her hull forward that struck the mine. Two fragments or two groups of fragments of the exploding mine struck the hull, but from my hurried inspection it is my belief that the mine, not being securely moored, was brushed somewhat aside by the im-

pact, and therefore the injury was not as great as it would have been had the anchoring device held the mine more firmly in place. So the ship was not as badly hurt as one would have expected her to be. That much for the mine, sir. Then I had the gallant, splendid help of Captain Senby and his mates and crew. I shall mention their performance in my written report."

"Better put it in early, then," advised the admiral, "for Senby and his mates go up for examination day after tomorrow. I can forward to the board an extract from your report."

"They are to be examined just the same, sir, though the 'Gloucester' is no more?"

"Oh, yes; England has a few more ships left," smiled the admiral, "and we cannot get along with a reduced number of hospital craft."

So, though Dave Darrin, on his return, escorted Belle to the chart-room and chatted with her a few moments, and even allowed her to remain while he worked, he sent for a yeoman and to him dictated an official report of the disaster, parts of which document did not fail to do justice to Captain Senby and his mates.

"Type that for two copies to be transmitted, and one to be filed here, as early as you can, and bring to me for signature," Dave directed. "I wish to go ashore after signing and sending off the reports."

For, at their parting, Admiral Wheatleigh had said:

"Darrin, you and your officers and men have been overworked for some time. You have done splendidly, but now you all need a short rest or your nerves will snap. You will therefore remain in port a few days, and I would recommend you to be liberal in the matter of shore leave."

Even before the typed reports had come in Lieutenant Fernald reported with a written list of the names of officers and men whom he recommended for shore leave beginning that evening.

As a matter of form Darrin glanced down through the list, then signed it.

"The last four men on the list report that they would like shore leave, but are out of funds, sir," hesitated Lieutenant Fernald.

Drawing his purse, Dave extracted four five-dollar bills.

"Lend this to them until pay-day," he directed, thrusting the money into the executive officer's hand. "They are dependable men, and will come to no harm. Up to eleven o'clock I shall be found at the Blank Hotel if wanted. At eleven I shall leave to come aboard, so you may send in a launch for me, Mr. Fernald."

As soon as he had received and signed the typed report in duplicate, and had taken steps to forward them, Darrin and Belle went ashore.

At ten o'clock that evening Dan Dalzell joined them.

"How was the hunting, Danny Grin?" Dave inquired, jovially.

"May I speak of such awful subjects before Mrs. Darrin?" Dan asked.

"I am sure you may, and do not delay gratifying my curiosity," Belle put in.

"Well, then," murmured Dalzell, delightedly, "all I can say is that the hunting proved wonderfully good. With the indispensable aid of the dirigible I located four submarines headed for this coast, and sank them all. I believe that each of the submarines was carrying a cargo of mines to enemy submarine mine-layers off this coast. Do you call that a day of good sport?"

"For every one but the Germans," Dave nodded, beamingly.

But Dan glanced at Belle to see how she took such joyous comments on the sudden deaths of enemies.

"I could feel sorry for the people of some nations, if we were at war with them," Belle Darrin stated, calmly. "But when I hear of the deaths of German submarine officers and sailors I feel a sense of relief at the thought that more of the loathsome beasts have been removed from a decent world."

Dan, too, and the other officers and the crew of

the "Reed" were granted several days in port. In fact, there was no need of their services in the same line for some time to come, for a temporary but effective stop had been put to German mine-laying in the North Sea and the Channel.

The masters, mates and crews of the "Olga" and the "Louisa" were tried and sentenced to death, and later were executed. Ober-Lieutenant Dreiner, for his cowardly attempt to murder Dave and his three new friends, was also sentenced to death.

Before his leave in port was ended Dave and Belle met "Mr. and Mrs. Launce" and learned that they were really the Earl and Countess of Denby. After her awful experience in the water the countess's health remained impaired for months, so the noble couple gave up the idea of spy work and turned their energies toward Red Cross work in France and Italy.

Sophia Weiner and her daughter were convicted of espionage in that they had sailed for England with false passports. They are now confined in some prison in England, and will remain there for some years after the war closes.

Captain Kennor reached home safely, where he learned that the other boats from the "Rigsdak" had reached a friendly shore. It was some months before the Danish master went to sea again.

The British admiral's report, sent through

channels to the Vice Admiral of the American destroyer fleet, and by him referred to the Secretary of the Navy, was of such character that Dave and Dan received the highest praise direct from Washington by cable, and afterwards by letter.

They had done their work in the finest American naval style, and had made a ten-strike against the German mine-layers.

But they took their honors easily, and had need to, for there was still greater work ahead of them after Belle had used up her few days' leave and had sailed back to France.

THE END